

CHRONICLES OF RESISTANCE: A BORDERLANDS TESTIMONIO

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This inquiry is an arts-based, narrative study that examines multiple manifestations of resistance as expressed by ordinary individuals who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. These expressions of resistance are offered as *testimonios*, defined as first-person narratives that bear witness to individual responses to systems of oppression. The testimonios are created within the context of the relationship between resistance and freedom, which can be seen as a mutual dependency, grounded in the reality that if some small amount of freedom did not exist, resistance could not manifest within the structures of domination. The key to enacting this freedom is the development of critical consciousness, a heightened awareness of the emancipatory power that lies in the recognition of the paradox of the few controlling the lives of the many. Often critical consciousness arises within an environment where imagination is reawakened by artists whose lives and work are situated within a practice of liberation and transformation. With a newly awakened critical consciousness, the oppressed are empowered to consider the option of critical resistance, those forms of dissent that arise not in opposition to a particular manifestation of oppression but rather in pursuit of imagined landscapes where social justice is the norm and oppression is vanquished. These utopian spaces arise within the Borderlands, liminal spaces where illusions of reality are jettisoned and creativity flourishes.

The application of this form of resistance within public education requires the recognition that the current climate reflects a convergence of government surveillance through high-stakes testing and educational colonization manifested through the infusion of profit-driven consultants and product lines within the system. This study includes three testimonios, created to offer examples whereby individuals respond to oppression by imagining and the enacting diverse manifestations of critical resistance in their everyday lives.

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Through the process of my doctoral study, I have earned the right to say that I have studied with Dr. Noreen Garman. With the completion of this degree, I now join the ranks of a very special collection of teachers and scholars who have been privileged share in her profound scholarship and to model her compassion and her intense commitment to the children of this

world. I do not take this privilege lightly, and I promise her that I will continue to work to justify her faith in me and that in every context within which I teach from this point forward, I will press on, I will honestly deliberate, and I will speak the truth to power without hesitation.

My inner circle of friends and family believed in me and didn't laugh out loud five years ago when I announced that I was returning to school yet again. In particular, I want to thank my children, Melissa and David, and the members of my chosen family, with special gratitude to Edwin, Alice, Toby and Leo, who often sat with me in the early morning light and offered silent encouragement as I waited impatiently for deep channels to open and the words to flow through me to the blank page.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an arts-based, narrative study that portrays understandings gleaned from an inquiry into the multiple manifestations of resistance expressed by ordinary individuals who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. The people and situations I studied resonate as individual, even noble, acts of dissent, but their efficacy lies in their interconnected nature. These expressions of resistance seek to imagine and then construct new forms of existence that are emblematic of what can be achieved when the subject is acting within an environment of freedom.

The inquiry is situated within what Denzin and Lincoln call “the discipline and practice of qualitative research.”¹ Their definition of qualitative research is one where the inquiry “is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world.”² When I first read this definition, I wondered what might be the alternative to being *in the world*. Of course, the answer can be found in that delusional state of being where the observer of the phenomena under study views herself as standing separate and apart, objective and uninvolved, untouched and therefore never touching those she studies. It is a delusion because, as both physics and cosmology teach us, the observer constructs the world she chooses to see; to deny that reality is to recede into the safety of an imagined objectivity that consciously participates in the creation of a system of hegemonic surveillance in the service of oppression. Even accepting this ontological view, I often felt lost

¹ Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Introduction. In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Third Edition. Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2000, 1.

² Ibid., 3.

in the conflicting demands of the multiple definitions and conflicting paradigms of qualitative inquiry. It was not until I turned to the work of Elliot Eisner that I was able to cast aside once and for all my own reticence to engage the inquiry fully and completely through the qualitative lens. In *The Enlightened Eye* (1998), Eisner sends me to a passage from *Night*, Elie Wiesel's tale of the Holocaust.

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.³

I knew this text very well, for its haunting words were part of my adolescent discovery of truths which were never spoken by my parents. Eisner's introduction to the passage included questions that were critical to my inquiry.

How shall we—or can we—relive what those who found themselves there experienced? Through what means can we participate, if only vicariously, in their reality and thus know even vaguely what they felt?⁴

Eisner contends that the writer has the power to use the text itself to answer these questions.

The creation of such a portrait depends upon the writer's ability to experience the qualities of place, to conceptualize their relationships, to experience the shifting pervasive qualities that permeate those relationships, and, not least, to imagine and render them through the text. The episode as lived has passed; the text as written lives.⁵

To incorporate this process in my inquiry, it was necessary to work within an arts-based practice. It was a logical choice for me to choose a space where “art, pedagogy, and research intersect,”⁶ as it reflected my academic work in the history of art and my work as a curator and

³ Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. New York: Discus Books, 1969, 44.

⁴ Eisner, Elliot W. *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998, 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶ Piantanida, Maria, Patricia L. McMahon, and Noreen B. Garman. Sculpting the Contours of Arts-based Educational Research within a Discourse Community. *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(2): 182-191, 2003, 183.

arts administrator in the 1990s. In this role, I facilitated the exhibition and performance of work by artists who chose to reject the commodification of culture in favor of a practice where their aesthetic expressions of conscience represented a praxis of social justice. During my doctoral studies, I learned that artists who challenge existing power relationships through their creative expressions were, in fact, working in parallel practices of dissent with social science researchers who were experimenting with “methodological shifts that were tied to political...interests charged by social and historical circumstances.”⁷ This willingness to recognize one’s surroundings, to be “in the world” resonated with what I now recognize to be the congruence of methodologies between aesthetic and research practices and created a foundation for my inquiry into multiple paradigms of resistance. I came to understand that activist art and activist inquiry share not only the intent to disrupt existing power relationships, but also share a commitment to common methodologies and formal strategies.⁸ This means that, depending upon which truism resonates generationally, I either wanted to structure my inquiry as one that would authentically manifest that the medium is the message; or, if you prefer, any inquiry I carried out must walk the walk rather than simply talking the talk.

Piantanida, McMahon, and Garman suggest that an arts-based inquiry must articulate a logic of justification that “clarifies the philosophical assumptions that guide a researcher’s thinking. These assumptions relate to what one takes to be reality (ontology) as well as the nature of truth claims (epistemology) that one values (axiology).”⁹ This charge greatly informed my thinking about how best to be creative in the space where art, education and research meet

⁷ Finley, Susan. Arts-based Inquiry: Performing Revolutionary Pedagogy. In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, third edition. Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005, 683.

⁸ Felshin, Nina, ed., *But is it art? The spirit of art as activism*. Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1995, 122.

⁹ Piantanida, 185.

and to draw upon particular theoretical frameworks within art and education as the solid ground from which to launch the creative texts that form the core of my dissertation.

Educator and philosopher Maxine Greene writes that the arts free our imaginations and awaken our natural ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise,¹⁰ while Elliott Eisner suggests that

The arts have an important role to play in refining our sensory systems and cultivating our imaginative abilities...A culture populated by people whose imagination is impoverished has a static future. In such a culture there will be little change because there will be little sense of possibility.¹¹

Artists whose creative practices are grounded in dissent have been my constant companions during this inquiry, so it is not surprising that I have invited them to be present in the dissertation narrative. The challenge has been to introduce the artworks, and the artists who create them, while diligently avoiding the temptation to over-mediate. Greene encourages educators to trust those with whom we enter into a dialogue to use their imaginative powers and to actualize works of art as part of the process of awakening to new ideas.

To situate the intersecting frameworks of activist art and activist inquiry within public education, I turned to the discourse on critical pedagogy, which offers a model of liberatory practice where public education is dedicated to the development of critical citizens. Here, pedagogies are evaluated not only for the transmission of knowledge (these days most often reduced to the results of standardized tests) but also for the way in which they are transformative in the face of exploitation and oppression.¹²

¹⁰ Greene, Maxine. *Releasing the imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1996, 125.

¹¹ Eisner, E. W. *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Wk8LUJX1eXoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=elliott+eisner&ots=5kJH4AAfoS&sig=VAqBr2FxjcuZHyzeM5L2py2ihNw#v=onepage&q=&f=false>, 5.

¹² McLaren, Peter. Critical pedagogy in the Age of Neoliberal Globalization. In *Capitalists & Conquerors: A Critical Pedagogy Against Empire*. Edited by Gustavo E. Fischman, Peter McLaren, Heinz Sünker, and Colin Lankshear. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, 168.

Connecting expressions of dissent within the arts, social sciences, and education led me to wonder if the very notion of resistance was more than a series of noble, yet unrelated and individualistically expressed, behaviors manifested in the face of oppression. I began to imagine the existence of a unified system of thought and action expressed across time, place and circumstance. Exploring the various discourses on resistance led me to a theory of critical resistance, defined by Hoy as dissent which arises within an emancipatory framework—that is, resistance grounded in a belief in fundamental freedoms rather than in response to a particular manifestation of oppression. Here was the underlying foundational principle for which I had been searching; and within that system of thought, my inquiry evolved to consider situating dissent expressed through the arts as a form of critical cultural resistance, where artistic expressions can be viewed not as an individual's response to a particular situation, but rather the catalyst for collective awakening to the possibility of social change. Underlying the critical resistance framework is a commitment to ethical action and to the understanding that an ordinary individual faced with extraordinary circumstances can find the courage to dissent.

Having determined that the inquiry would be arts-based, it was now time to identify those stories of critical resistance that would form the creative expression of the inquiry. I tell three stories, each in a different form and each describing multiple manifestations of resistance. To tell these tales, I have chosen *testimonio*, a genre defined by John Beverley as a first-person account of the events and experiences of an individual life or the lives of those they know. The term comes from the Spanish, *dar testimonio*, to testify, to give truthful witness. Each of the stories is a *testimonio* and each stands at a unique point in the evolving continuum of this

powerful genre. I will contend that together, these three stories constitute a single, coherent testimonio, which arises through the intertextuality that forms the basis for arts-based inquiry.¹³

To imagine and then enact this intertextual transformation from multiplicity to unity requires the introduction of a new context and character for the inquiry. I will contend that critical resistance thrives neither within the center nor at the margins of society, but rather in a liminal space envisioned by theorists who escape to the Borderland that exists between oppressive structures. Within this space of free thought and free will, imagination thrives and stories of resistance emerge. Part utopian landscape and part science fiction alter-world, the Borderlands will be the site for the testimonial retelling.

I've chosen the term *Chronicles of Resistance* to describe the stories I am about to tell. The term *chronicles*, which derives its meaning from the word *chronos*, or time, traditionally signifies a linear telling, a recounting of a series of events in chronological order. But as Stephen Sondheim points out, "Art isn't easy," and at some point in my work the notion of order, design, symmetry and balance dissolved to make room for another voice that emerged as the stories continued to unfold. Imagine my surprise when the mythic Coyote Trickster, who appears in tales of deception throughout the Americas and who made his presence known in my Masters Thesis on German artist Joseph Beuys, reappeared in the telling of these testimonios. In North American mythology,

The Trickster is at once the scorned outsider and the culture-hero, the mythic transformer and the buffoon, a creature of low purpose and questionable habits who establishes precedent, dabbles in the creation of the world that will be...He may assume an array of contradictory personae in the course of a single narrative, moving from one to the other with the skill of a practiced shape-shifter... Trickster personifies marginality. He stands in the "Betwixt and Between", the transitional state that of liminality. Straddling the juncture of two worlds, he belongs to neither and yet to both, and if his behavior confounds us, it is because

¹³ Finley, 686.

we see in him the apparent confusion that characterizes the marginal/liminal landscape.¹⁴

Because these chronicles are created within my constructed identity as the Trickster, my aesthetic toolbox expands exponentially from what may normally be expected in a dissertation. I can use humor and irony, popular culture and excerpts from Broadway shows, letters to a muse long gone but whose love affair with Paris served as my inspiration and guide, and even the memory of a house falling upon and destroying the wicked in a land where oppression is vanquished by a drag queen. This liminal space where the Trickster emerges to carry out her testimonial charge exists within the Borderlands, where linear time is exposed as illusion and where a shape shifting guide takes the inquiry to a place where impoverished imaginations are checked at the door.

In Chapter 1, I introduce my intent for the inquiry and outline the various elements that the reader will encounter. In Chapter 2, I describe my intent to produce an arts-based narrative study as a response to the current situation in public education. Chapter 3 is the description of models of resistance, with the concept of critical resistance as the grounding for all other forms of emancipatory dissent, including cultural, ethical and everyday resistance. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the testimonios, *The Trial of Doctor Bill*; *Letters from Paris*; and *A Pair of Ruby Slippers* respectively. Each testimonio is preceded by a brief prologue that seeks less to mediate the content than to welcome the reader. Chapter 6 describes the theoretical framework for the discourse of testimonio and makes the case that this genre is evolving in response to new forms of oppression and new expressions of dissent. Chapter 7 includes my brief reflections on what I have learned from this experience.

¹⁴ Ellis, Rodney. Trickster: Shaman of the liminal. *Sail: studies of American Indian literature* 5(4): 55-68, 1993. <http://oncampus.richmond.edu/faculty/ASAIL/SAIL2/54.html#55>, 57.

2.0 SHOW ME THE MONEY

2.1 HIGH STAKES TESTING AND GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE

Like much public conversation in contemporary society, the debates on the efficacy of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 have been loud and raucous, often uncivil, and rarely informative. One of NCLB's most visible elements, high-stakes testing, has generated a great deal of conversation regarding its intentionality, its methodology, and its efficacy as a policy tool for educational reform.¹⁵ As Garman points out, "There is endless talk today in public spaces about education, but the discussion seems to have metastasized into technocratic demands for political accountability. More than ever the educational discourse that is molding public opinion is dominated by political pundits."¹⁶ Using a model advanced by Giroux and Gunzenhauser, I will take the position that high-stakes testing can be seen as a form of surveillance of students, teachers, parents, and administrators performed by government as a form of power, discipline and control.

The presence of high-stakes testing in the public schools has shaped educational practice at all levels. Gunzenhauser defines high-stakes testing as "the use of standardized testing measures as criteria for determining the quality of schools, promotion of children to the next grade, high

¹⁵ It's important to note that while the public dialogue on high-stakes testing has become more intense since NCLB, the movement toward standardized testing did not begin with the passage of this legislation in 2001. As Smith points out, "The most common reform in American schools since about 1985 is the imposition of academic standards and high-stakes tests as a way to make schools 'accountable.'" Smith, Mary Lee. *Political Spectacle and the Fate of American Schools*. New York: Routledge Farmer, 47. .

¹⁶Garman, Noreen. "Curriculum Leaders as Public Intellectuals in an Impoverished Landscape," Essay prepared by invitation for the perspectives section of the Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy. Vol.3, No.1., 2005, 5.

school graduation, teacher bonuses, or the governance of a school.”¹⁷ Programs of standardized, high-stakes testing are often implemented in what Smith describes as an atmosphere of “degenerative politics,”¹⁸ whereby those in control are faced with two conflicting paradigms: one which stresses the technical accountability of testing instruments defined as rational, empirical standards; and a second which is grounded in the political arena, where the goal is the retention of power. Smith’s research indicates that it is the political that most often supplants any tendency toward rationality in the decision-making that surrounds high-stakes testing. Henry Giroux situates the issue of high-stakes testing in a larger, more ominous discourse relating to the role of public schools in the United States post-September 11. Giroux contends that schools have a role to play in helping students prepare to truly defend democracy against the onslaught of political propaganda that followed the attacks of September 11, to resist the impulse to translate unanchored grief and horror into rampant patriotism and an unwillingness to passively relinquish Constitutional freedoms—in other words, to help students evolve into critical citizens.¹⁹ Giroux reminds us, however, that such a task is daunting in the best of times. Today, for schools to fulfill that role will be particularly difficult since

many public schools are overburdened with high-stakes tests and harsh accountability systems designed to get teachers to narrow their curriculum and to focus only on raising test scores. Consequently, any struggle to make schools more democratic and socially relevant will have to link the battle for critical citizenship to an ongoing fight against turning schools into testing centers and teachers into technicians.²⁰

Faced with the reality of high-stakes testing, school districts rarely focus on critical citizenry; rather, they must attend to an immediate and often onerous goal, namely reaching

¹⁷ Gunzenhauser, Michael G. High-stakes Testing and the Default Philosophy of Education. *Theory Into Practice*, Winter 2003 v42 il p. 51(9), 2003, 3.

¹⁸ Smith, Mary Lee. *Political Spectacle and the Fate of American Schools*. New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004, 5.

¹⁹ Giroux, Henry A. Democracy, Freedom, and Justice after September 11th: Rethinking the Role of Educators and the Politics of Schooling. *Teachers College Record* 104(6): 1138–1162. <http://www.tcrecord.org>, 2002, 146.

²⁰ Ibid.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Goals mandated by NCLB. School administrators adopt a variety of strategies to improve test scores, ranging from abandoning overall curriculum goals in favor of a teach to the test approach to creating school spirit slogans, pep-rallies, and motivational bulletin boards to remind students and teachers about what is at stake if AYP is not achieved. At the same time, the decision to publish the lists of districts that do and do not achieve AYP takes the competition beyond the schoolyard, as parents and other taxpayers are encouraged to become involved in monitoring the academic achievement of their children, their neighbor's children, and the children of strangers for whom they are picking up the tab. Parents are also encouraged to monitor their child's performance to assure that s/he remains well positioned in the competition with other children, thereby eroding any sense of community or collective responsibility for all children. It is this seemingly paradoxical set of behaviors—I must monitor how the public schools spend my tax money to educate all of the children in the community, while simultaneously assuring that my child succeeds in the competition where some children are winners and others are losers—that sets the scene for degeneration of the discourse on the role of public education in the nation.

Maxine Greene warns that “preoccupations with testing, measurement, standards, and the like follow from a damaging approach to children as human resources, their supposed malleability and the belief that they can and should be molded in accord with the needs of the technological society.”²¹ Greene challenges this emphasis on the instrumental role of education and offers instead the idea that there is an intrinsic value in transmitting knowledge and offering meaningful opportunities for a child to explore the world and her/his place within it. Biesta also challenges the merely instrumental role of education:

²¹ Greene, Maxine. Imagining Futures: The Public School and Possibility. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, (32) 2: 267-280, 2000, 270.

education cannot and should not be reduced to a merely instrumental relationship as this would ignore the personhood—or at least the emerging personhood—of the child...and raises the issue of the role of educators in perpetuating a system that generates the educational paradox described in the Kantian question “How do I cultivate freedom through coercion?”—because in seeing education as a process in which the child is in a sense made into a person, the personhood of the child is simultaneously affirmed and denied.²²

Gunzenhauser situates the project of understanding the consequences of high stakes testing within Foucault’s theory of the exercise of power, because to do so is critical to any effort to “create responses to high stakes accountability and establish the grounds for successor reforms.”²³ In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault examines the modern penal system and the history of how power is constructed through the use of surveillance and discipline. He bases his study on Bentham’s Panopticon, an architectural device that allowed the prison warden to perfectly visualize the prisoners at all times. A watch tower is positioned in the center of the prison, surrounded by open, visible cells in which prisoners are housed, isolated from each other and constantly on display for the ever-vigilant observer. Once this architectural wonder is complete,

All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy...[the cells]... are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible... each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication.²⁴

Foucault recognizes that the brilliance of the Panopticon is in its efficacy as a device to generate a power relationship between the watcher and the watched. Once the observed recognizes that the surveillance of the observer is ubiquitous and pervasive, the physical

²² Biesta, Gert J. J. Pedagogy Without Humanism: Foucault and the Subject of Education. *Interchange* 29(1): 1-16, 1998, 4.

²³ Gunzenhauser, Michael G., Normalizing the Educated subject: A Foucaultian Analysis of High-Stakes Accountability, *Educational studies: A Journal of the American Education Studies Association*, Vol. 39. pp. 241-259, 2006, 243.

²⁴ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage. (Orig. pub. 1975), 1995, 200.

presence of the inspector becomes irrelevant and, “the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary.”²⁵ The surveillance creates within the inmate/object a total acceptance and embrace of power. No need for the clumsy externalities of coercion, because each subject becomes his or her own overseer. Freire’s²⁶ notion of the internalization of the oppressor, manifested in the complete dissolution of the sentient self as the compliant prisoner, makes obsolete the disciplinary behaviors identified with the role of warden. In the case of high-stakes testing, rather than an individual serving in the role of overseer, it is the federal government, and the observed becomes the entire system of public education.

The high-stakes testing environment that generates fear and surveillance also creates opportunities for entrepreneurs from the for-profit sector to penetrate emerging public education markets with new and improved product lines. In the years since the passage of the legislation, this nation has spent millions of public and private dollars on pre-packaged curricula, teacher-proof content delivery techniques, and data-driven decision making programs all marketed as the magical elixir guaranteed to raise standardized test scores. These interventions are created by armies of high-priced, out-of-town educational consultants who offer their version of a silver bullet that will transform public education into an efficient, effective system of production guaranteed to create compliant, obedient children who, if they don’t drop out, zone out, or act out, will become compliant, obedient adults.

Yet, despite all of the resources invested in these various potions (magical and otherwise), public education reform and the imposition of regimes of high-stakes testing are failing to meet the needs of society’s most vulnerable children. It can sometimes appear as though we have abandoned our democratic aspiration to create an educational system that meets

²⁵ Ibid., 201.

²⁶ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder, 1970, 58.

the individual needs of every child, while at the same time allowing the traditional roles of stakeholders within public education to be eroded. Parents are no longer viewed as support systems for students as they learn the skills essential to become active, engaged participants in a democracy. Instead, parents are now seen as consumers of educational products and services within a competitive marketplace. Teachers have been stripped of their responsibilities to engage in the creation and interpretation of knowledge and instead are expected to function as pre-programmed delivery systems for the latest version of the market's new and improved managed curricula. Children, who once were viewed as our most precious resource, the future of our society, are now classified merely as outputs of the factory model of education. The only winners are those who are positioned to take full advantage of the profit-making opportunities within public education.

Despite these and other concerns that have been expressed about the legislation and its intended and unintended consequences, there has been very little organized resistance to neoliberal, market-driven incursions into public education. In my view, crafting a response to the current situation in public education can best be viewed as a social justice issue. My inquiry focuses on exploring how models of dissent that succeed in other contexts can be adapted as ways of thinking about resistance against NCLB and other oppressive government interventions within public education.

2.2 PRIVATE INCURSIONS INTO PUBLIC EDUCATION

Over the course of the inquiry, I noted a second wave of change within public education that grew from the seeds of privatization of curriculum development and the penetration of the education marketplace by for-profit consulting firms. I have come to believe the 21st century

colonization of public education is now taking the form of substantial investments by philanthropic organizations, foundations established as tax shelters by those who have amassed great wealth in the private sector.

To illustrate two of the most public examples, I will describe the most recent incursions into public education by two philanthropic organizations, the Eli Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, both of which are playing out their visions of education reform in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

2.2.1 The Broad Foundation

The Eli Broad Foundation's foray into public education began in 2002. The foundation's statement of purpose for its education program is: "Transforming urban K-12 public education through better governance, management, labor relations and competition."²⁷

How we use language to name the objects of our interest is elucidating. Naming draws boundaries around our thinking, eliminates the need to discriminate or decipher, and categorizes and determines the landscape of what is and is not possible. In this regard, it is informative to note that the Broad Foundation's statement of purpose does not name either teachers or students. The foundation's flagship program is the Broad Superintendent's Academy for Seasoned Executives, where former executives from education, the military, business, nonprofit and government sectors participate in a ten-month training program to prepare them to lead failing urban school districts. The Superintendent's Academy website offers some interesting factoids to consider:

1. Eight classes have graduated from the Academy since Eli Broad began this work in 2002.

²⁷ Broad Foundation. The Broad Foundation Education Home.
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

2. Graduates of the Broad Superintendent's Academy work in 38 cities in 24 states.
3. In 2009, nearly half of the open superintendent positions in large urban school districts were filled with Eli's graduates.²⁸

At the Broad Superintendent's Academy, the curriculum focuses on setting standards, alignment of materials to national standards, assessing impact of professional development, managing stakeholders, demanding rigorous use of student assessment data, and strategic and tactical planning strategies to deliver on the Broad vision.²⁹ This language has become so commonplace and so expertly crafted to align with a corporate model that critique can sometimes sound naïve and romantic. But critique is essential, and it is important to situate the Broad epistemological stance in contrast with a more humanistic one. Bill Ayers, for example, asks educators to consider a different model of what constitutes a good school, one

where students live in the present tense; where children are viewed as human beings, which students are safe and those who teach them are fearless, where diversity is honored, where there are high expectations and standards and where educators create an intimate community where children find unconditional acceptance.³⁰

In 2005, the Pittsburgh Public Schools hired a Broad graduate as its superintendent. During his four-year tenure in Pittsburgh, he has filled key staff positions with Broad graduates, including the Deputy Superintendent, and has accepted Broad Foundation grants to help him carry out various educational initiatives, including closing 22 schools, instituting managed curriculum at all levels,³¹ and mandating quarterly administration of *4Sight*, a commercial product that claims to be aligned with Pennsylvania's NCLB mandated standardized test³². The

²⁸ Broad Foundation. The Academy. <http://broadacademy.org/about/overview.html>

²⁹ The Broad Foundation Superintendents Academy. <http://broadacademy.org/about/services/training.html>

³⁰ Ayers, William. *Teaching the Personal and the Political: Essays on Hope and Justice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2004, 40.

³¹ Young, Chris. Making the Grade. *Pittsburgh City Paper*. August 30, 2007, 1/

³² Pittsburgh Public Schools: Plans and Initiatives: Strategic Plans & Initiatives. <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/14311084145448813/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=62072>.

results reveal standardized test scores in grades 3, 5, and 8 have improved for some children. Test scores in grade 11 have not improved or have fallen,³³ perhaps because high school students just refuse to be standardized. Nevertheless, there is a strong feeling in the district and among the Superintendent's many supporters that the Broad strategies have succeeded. As an ancillary benefit of this perception of success and the clever publicity machine that Broad helps to provide for its superintendents, the Pittsburgh Public School District was recently invited to apply for, and was ultimately awarded, a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

2.2.2 The Gates Foundation

In his 2009 Annual Letter, Bill Gates wrote the following about his \$34 billion foundation's activities within public education:

Nine years ago, the foundation decided to invest in helping to create better high schools, and we have made over \$2 billion in grants. The goal was to give schools extra money for a period of time to make changes in the way they were organized (including reducing their size), in how the teachers worked, and in the curriculum. The hope was that after a few years they would operate at the same cost per student as before, but they would have become much more effective. Many of the small schools that we invested in did not improve students' achievement in any significant way.³⁴

The admiration one might feel in response to Gates' honest admission of the failure of his first big idea quickly fades when it becomes apparent that many of the schools that did not improve had turned themselves inside out in order to receive the money and now had to find a way to put themselves back together once the Gates Foundation moved on to new opportunities. Gates goes on in his letter to announce his next initiative. "Based on what the foundation has

³³ Pittsburgh Public Schools: Academics & Student Achievement. District Achieves AYP. <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/143110829171011580/site/default.asp>.

³⁴ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. 2009 Annual Letter from Bill Gates: Introduction. <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/Pages/2009-united-states-education.aspx>

learned so far, we have refined our strategy...One of the key things...is to help their teachers be more effective in the classroom.”³⁵

To operationalize this notion, Gates has developed a new program, “Intensive Partnerships in Teaching” and is investing \$290 million in four communities to transform how teachers are recruited, developed, rewarded, and retained. The four communities are the Hillsborough County Public Schools (Tampa, Fla.): \$100 million; the Memphis City Schools: \$90 million; a network of five charter school networks in Los Angeles: \$60 million; and, of course, the Pittsburgh Public Schools: \$40 million.”³⁶

Millions of dollars in hand, the Pittsburgh Public School District is now poised and ready to institute the Gates-funded program entitled “Empowering Effective Teachers in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.” Here’s a brief overview of what it means to be an empowered teacher under the Gates plan:

1. Tie teacher compensation to student achievement.
2. Recruit effective teachers to empower. To accomplish this goal, the Pittsburgh School District has expressed its willingness to hire high-capacity, non-certified teachers in Mathematics, Science and Special Education. (What do we think about a system where physical education teachers have to be certified but special education teachers just have to have high capacity?)
3. Exit teachers who do not materially improve student learning.³⁷

It has been a long time since I had the privilege of teaching in a public school, but I can recall enough of the exquisite joys and soul-deadening challenges to be certain that I would not feel empowered by having my salary or my continued employment determined by whether my 11th graders performed well on a standardized test administered on a single day in March. Nor

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Intensive Partnerships in Teaching. <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/united-states/Pages/effective-teaching-fact-sheet.aspx>.

³⁷ Empowering Effective Teachers in the Pittsburgh Public Schools: Executive Summary. http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/143110824102116477/lib/143110824102116477/downloads/PPS_EmpoweringEffectiveTeachers_FINAL090731_1500.pdf.

am I likely to feel much of a kinship to newly recruited colleagues from other sectors who think that pedagogy is a brand of trail bike.

2.3 SUMMARY

I have described two discrete but related forms of incursion into public education, which I believe are interrelated. First there was federal/state intervention in the form of surveillance enacted through high-stakes testing and a system of rewards and punishments designed to quell any forms of resistance. The arsenal of rhetorical weapons used to weaken systems of dissent began by demonizing teachers and then overlaying factory models of production on the process of engaging living, breathing, highly vulnerable human beings. The second wave, however, was much more insidious and difficult to resist. After all, there was no invasion; no enemy force broke through a defensive Maginot Line drawn carefully around our nation's classrooms. No need to use the threat of punishment in this context, when you can be so successful with hegemonic systems whereby school districts actually *apply* to be invaded by enormous national foundations. The prize, of course, is money and business proven strategies laced with a healthy dose of a neoliberal corporate worldview regarding how to make public education work.

The transformation of public education, first by government and then by private philanthropy, weakens a critical pillar of the infrastructure of a democratic society. The question of why there has been little in the way of a collective, organized countervailing force in the form of educator resistance is the question that motivates this inquiry. The temptation to frame this question within the context of a simplistic, prescriptive dogma of dissent is countered by my experience of knowing and working with so many dedicated, committed teachers and administrators--who do not lack courage, but rather find themselves in circumstances where

paths of resistance are obscured by propaganda and the potential for collective action is extinguished through a system of competitive rewards and punishments.

Garman describes the “alienation of language...that arises in an impoverished educational landscape.”³⁸ The introduction of the idea of resistance within that landscape is about stimulating the potential for imagination, and in so doing, envisioning a world where educators can function as public intellectuals, those who make the difficult decision to speak the truth to power. As this inquiry moves into a study of various theories of resistance, I call upon Garman’s vision about how curriculum scholars—and other educators as well—can function as public intellectuals to create a language and a landscape of dissent.

Curriculum scholars are currently probing the concerns about conditions necessary to create a coherent democratic community that nurtures curriculum leaders as public intellectuals. I situate curriculum leaders here in an impoverished landscape, not to identify them as victims of public schooling, surrendering to forces of political indoctrination. I’ve met too many administrators and teachers who...struggle each day to create within themselves and others the conditions for renewal. My intent here is to understand and embrace the struggle that challenges us all ... to call up the potentials of our creative, artistic, scientific and intellectual selves so that we can create a richly textured landscape of educational experiences.³⁹

³⁸ Garman, 5.

³⁹ Garman, 6.

3.0 THEORIES OF RESISTANCE

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Declaration of Independence

To the wrongs that need resistance,
To the right that needs assistance,
To the future in the distance,
Give yourselves.

Carrie Chapman Catt

We declare our right on this earth...to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence *by any means necessary*.

Malcolm X

This disease will be the end of many of us, but not nearly all. And the dead will be commemorated, and we'll struggle on with the living, and we are not going away. We won't die secret deaths anymore. The world only spins forward. We will be citizens. The time has come.

Tony Kushner *Angels in America*

But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

The Gospel of Mark 10:31

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Navigating the landscape of the history and practice of dissent can be a harrowing experience, where multiple theories of resistance, each reflecting a single aspect of oppression, swirl around in the dust of utopian fantasies and folk songs of protest. In the chaos, the poetic prophesies of Ginsberg's "Howl," Meeropol's "Strange Fruit," Dylan's "Masters of War," and ACT-UP's "Silence = Death" collide with the toxic ranting of birthers and tea party maniacs, each an exemplar of resistance to someone.

Ultimately, I was able to stand outside the chaotic landscape, created to some degree by my own history of social protest, and construct a single moment of clarity in which I could coherently observe and then name the phenomena of resistance. I found my epistemological lifeline within the theory of critical resistance, advanced by David Hoy, which provided the logic of justification⁴⁰ and ontological stance to frame this portion of the inquiry.

3.2 CRITICAL RESISTANCE

In attempting to describe the environment in which resistance can arise, Hoy maintains that "resistance and freedom...are linked both conceptually and practically. To the extent that attempts to build freedom into the social structure miscarry, resistance will arise. The motivation for resistance comes from encountering constraints on freedom."⁴¹ This relationship between

⁴⁰ Piantanida, Maria, Patricia L. McMahon, and Noreen B. Garman. Sculpting the Contours of Arts-based Educational Research within a Discourse Community. *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(2): 182-191, 2003, 185.

⁴¹ Hoy, David C. *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, 1.

resistance and freedom, which can be seen as a mutual dependency, is also grounded in the reality that if some small amount of freedom did not exist, resistance could not manifest within the structures of domination. To further problematize the notion of freedom, Hoy draws upon Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment*, the frustration experienced by an individual who realizes that what is consciously experienced as freedom "may in effect be a self-denial that grows out of the knowledge that one is not powerful enough and thus not free enough to generate one's own values."⁴² From this position of *ressentiment*, the individual further relinquishes the possibility of resistance in favor of the retreat into apathy.

Yet, Hoy does not suggest that this frustration is an insurmountable barrier to resistance. Instead, he contends that there are two kinds of resistance. The first manifests as a resistance to domination, while the second manifests as resistance in the name of emancipation.⁴³ To distinguish between these two frameworks, he offers the addition of critique, or critical resistance, which makes it possible to "distinguish emancipatory resistance from resistance that has been co-opted by the oppressive forces."⁴⁴

This distinction is based upon the idea that when one simply resists domination, the factors that define the oppression are the determinants of the nature of the freedom the resistance movement desires. Even in the quest for freedom, therefore, the oppressed define resistance within the context of the boundaries established by the oppressor. Paulo Freire suggests that recognizing the absence of freedom is a fundamental element of acquiring *conscientização* or critical consciousness, where the individual learns to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.⁴⁵ Once critical

⁴² Hoy, 2.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Hoy, 3.

⁴⁵ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder, 1970, 17.

consciousness is achieved, the oppressed are free to interpret their surroundings and awaken to the ubiquitous presence of power. This is aligned with Foucault's contention that the oppressed can awaken and then recognize the hegemonic climate of surveillance. This awakening to critical consciousness requires that the individual recognize his or her freedom and make the choice to use that freedom as a platform for imaginative thinking.

Maxine Greene calls upon Arendt in constructing a definition of freedom that begins in the development of consciousness, defined as:

A moment of being, of mediation between what impinges on one from without and one's response. Lacking such critical perspective, people are not inclined to seek out words. Thought, after all, grows through language; without thought or "freedom in relation to what one does," there is little desire to appear among others and speak in one's own voice. Feeling this way people are unlikely to search for the spaces where they can come together to establish a "sphere of freedom."⁴⁶

3.2.1 Critical Consciousness and Freedom

Critical consciousness and freedom, then, are mutually dependent, with each manifesting in a nonlinear progression generated by recognition of the possibility of the other. The idea of unbreakable bond between the demand for freedom and the development of consciousness is seductive, because it suggests that if an environment of freedom could be developed, consciousness would evolve throughout humanity, leading in turn to an increased demand for freedom. Yet, individuals have been conditioned to believe that it is transgressive to speak of freedom outside of the rhetoric tied to the imperialist export of American democracy, like another Disney attraction, to the shores of foreign lands. This unwillingness to think of freedom as liberation of the self is a particularly potent form of blindness, arising both from Foucault's

⁴⁶ Greene, Maxine. *The Dialectic of Freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1998, 3.

description of surveillance and power as well as a highly functional defense against the despair of acknowledging the chains forged in a lifetime of accommodation. Greene reminds us that

When oppression or exploitation or segregation or neglect is perceived as “natural” or a “given,” there is little stirring in the name of freedom...When people cannot name alternatives, imagine a better state of things, share with others a project of change, they are likely to remain anchored or submerged, even as they proudly assert their autonomy.⁴⁷

To acknowledge the absurdity of such a state of being—anchored or submerged while asserting autonomy—is the beginning of the journey to consciousness. This awakening, the naming of alternatives, is facilitated through imagination. To crash through the gates of Plato’s cave requires the ability to imagine that there is some landscape on the other side.

The fundamental question remains, how do we describe the praxis of critical resistance--and, in so doing, test the potential value of this framework to serve as a model for individual or collective acts of resistance? In attempting to describe such a praxis, I will investigate a specific set of historical events whereby large numbers of people engaged in acts of resistance in the service of an emancipatory vision of society.

In 1968, the world was enveloped in a global surge of student resistance. In Tokyo, Madrid, Rome, Mexico City, Warsaw, Berkeley and New York, students rose up in an explosive wave of dissent. What follows is the story of one of those rebellions, the events of the spring of 1968 in Paris, a period which has become known simply as *May 68*.⁴⁸

3.3 UPRISING IN PARIS MAY 1968

A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of student revolt. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre: Pope and Central

⁴⁷ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁸ Of all of the many symbolic terms that have been used to provide a coherent label to the complex events that erupted in and around Paris during that time, I have chosen to use *May 68*, since it the one most frequently used in the writings of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the leaders of the student demonstrations.

Committee, Kissinger and de Gaulle, French Communists and German police-spies. But now it has become world-wide: Berkeley, Berlin, Tokyo, Madrid, Warsaw—the student rebellion is spreading like wildfire, and authorities everywhere are frantically asking themselves what hit them.⁴⁹

On the surface, France appeared to be a relatively comfortable place in 1968. Charles de Gaulle had been President for ten years. During that time, he sought to revitalize the French economy and foster the identity of a fully independent France, tenaciously refusing to align with either the United States or the Soviet Union in the global cold war. Politically, historians describe a nation where everything was calm and quiet.⁵⁰ Yet Kristin Ross offers another story, one that documents years of opposition to the Algerian War, worker unrest, and the rise of Marxism, all of which have been ignored by accounts most assuredly written by the victorious.⁵¹

The events of May 68 began as a student protest against de Gaulle's policies relating to university curriculum and admission. At the end of the World War II, France saw a sudden expansion of its population. Over the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, this expanded population worked its way through the educational system; and a percentage found itself in the university system.⁵² It soon became clear that there was a change in the profile of the French university, with institutions accepting in a new kind of student—not the scion of the upper class, but young people from across all segments of French society. Daniel Singer describes the changes that forever transformed higher education in France.

University education is not just for boys who will take over from Daddy or for future lawyers who will go into politics or business. It does not just provide the high priests of the administration and the captains of industry. It also supplies the

⁴⁹ Cohn-Bendit, Daniel. *Obsolete Communism: The Left-wing Alternative*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 1968, 23.

⁵⁰ Seidman, Michael. *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968*. New York: Bergahn Books, 2004, 221.

⁵¹ Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 9.

⁵² Before World War II, France had 50,000 students and a population of 42 million. By 1948, France had 175,000 students and by the time of the May explosion in 1958, 500,000 were registered at the universities out of a total population of 50 million. Singer, Daniel. *Prelude to Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002, 45.

lieutenants and, increasingly, the noncommissioned officers for the huge social organization.⁵³

The French university system found itself trying to respond to the increased number of students and the overcrowding in dormitories and classrooms that followed. In response, de Gaulle enacted the Fouchet Plan of 1965-66 which offered a new model of higher education:

There would be four-year degrees for people completing their university education...but the university would also provide second-rate degrees, after two years of study, preparing students for junior jobs in teaching, government, or industry.⁵⁴

The Fouchet Plan also included a proposal to abolish free university admission in order to limit the number of new students to a level that the government authorities thought the system could bear. Protests against the Fouchet Plan began at the Nanterre campus of the University of Paris in November 1967. What began as a dispute around the conditions specific to the University of Paris quickly changed in focus and tone as student leaders like Daniel Cohn-Bendit used the opportunity to rally nascent opposition to American foreign policy in general and the Viet Nam War in particular.

As opposition to the Vietnam War assumed international proportions, French students...were increasingly involved in campus demonstrations, the more so as their hatred of this war went hand in hand with the dawning realization that their own universities were nothing more than cogs in the capitalist machine.⁵⁵

On March 22, 1968,⁵⁶ 142 members of the National Vietnam Committee decided to occupy the administrative building of the Nanterre campus. Police were sent to clear the protesters; on March 28, six were arrested. The conflicts continued for weeks with multiple confrontations and arrests, until on May 2, the administration closed the Nanterre campus.

⁵³ Ibid, 46.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 47.

⁵⁵ Cohn-Bendit, 24.

⁵⁶ Sources used to construct these events include: Reader, 1993; Singer, 1970; Cohn-Bendit, 2000; Feenberg and Freedman, 2001; Kellner, 2001; and Ric's Metropole Paris, 1998:
<http://www.metropoleparis.com/1998/318/chron318.html>.

By late April, the student dissent was already growing at the Sorbonne in Paris, and on May 3, students demonstrated in support of Nanterre. On May 10, police and students clashed throughout the Latin Quarter resulting in multiple arrests and injuries with newspapers showing horrifying images of unarmed students beaten by riot police. On May 11, the major labor unions in the nation called for a general strike in support of the students and as a protest against the extraordinarily violent level of government response to what had generally been seen as peaceful student protests.

The labor response spread throughout the nation—by May 22, an estimated nine million workers were on strike.⁵⁷ The implications of the strike were enormous, as Ross notes in describing the collective sense of astonishment in the minds of the French public that a simple student protest evolved into a general strike.

It gives a sense of what happens to daily life when nine million people across all sections of public and private employment—from department stores to ship builders—simply stop working. May 68 was the largest mass movement in French history.⁵⁸

On May 15, 2,500 students occupied the Theatre l'Odeon, while the Renault factory at Cleon was occupied by workers. On May 24, on what has become known as the “Night of the Barricades,” students and workers together burned the Paris Stock Exchange. Later that week, in secret negotiations, de Gaulle reached an agreement with trade union leaders, which the rank and file promptly rejected. With his government teetering, de Gaulle fled to a French military base in Germany. He returned a few days later. On May 30 in a radio address, de Gaulle raised the threat of civil war when he promised the French people that he would use military intervention to control civil unrest. The military threat was not an empty one. In calling out the army, de Gaulle

Reader, Keith. *The May 1968 Events in France: Reproductions and Interpretations*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1993, 138.

⁵⁸Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 3.

was evidencing his determination to put an end to the disorder and asked the question to the demonstrators and strikers, “Do you want power? If thousands of you are in the streets, then this must be the case. Fine, try to seize it from the army and its tanks.”⁵⁹ The presence of the military and the fact that agreements were reached with most of the striking unions in early June caused the revolutionary fervor to diminish. The national student union called off street demonstrations, while the government banned a number of leftist organizations. Ultimately, de Gaulle dissolved the national assembly and called for new election.

On 30 June, the second round of parliamentary elections brought a crushing Gaullist victory. The ‘parliament of the scared’ (as de Gaulle himself dubbed it) had more than a hundred Right-wing gains from the left (in an assembly 485 strong).⁶⁰

3.3.1 May 68 as a Model of Critical Resistance

An analysis to determine if the events of May 68 constitute a model of critical resistance must begin with the notion of freedom. For if resistance and freedom are inextricably linked, the students in Nanterre and later in Paris had to recognize that they had sufficient freedom to name their oppression, to sense its potential weaknesses, to imagine that they had the power to act within the context of their circumstances, and to envision an alternative reality. It is interesting to speculate about why Nanterre was the site where the students recognized the reality of their freedom and where the resistance was so effectively mobilized. Officially known as Paris University X Nanterre, the campus was opened in 1964 as an extension of the Sorbonne. Feenberg and Freedman describe Nanterre as typical of French working-class enclave.

For this city was a suburban outpost of bourgeois family life, full of young people whose future was staked in the success of capitalism, arch-consumers for a consumer culture... Nanterre was a far cry from the Sorbonne, where students’

⁵⁹ Ross, 65.

⁶⁰ Reader, 19.

lives were unquestionably their own, where they frequented cafes and friends unimpeded in every respect.⁶¹

Of course, the fundamental difference between Nanterre and Paris was social class. The notion that freedom can be purchased is a given in the lives of the upper classes. At the same time, the commodification of freedom mitigates the recognition of the power of dominant forces to withdraw that which it has sold as quickly as that which it has given. It is interesting to consider whether the seduction of the masses is stronger in an environment where students believe that “their lives were unquestionably their own” rather than in an environment where the reality of oppression is too present to ignore.

The Viet Nam War protests were also a catalyst in shattering the illusion that the freedom offered by the oppressors included freedom to name the failures and atrocities committed by those in power. Opposition to the war, unlike class size or curriculum content, could not be easily dismissed as self-indulgent narcissism. In fact, it served as evidence that when students are truly free, they can recognize that oppressed peoples of the world are irrevocably connected. Cohn-Bendit believed that students at Nanterre felt a particular closeness to the peasants in Viet Nam.⁶² This is echoed by Ross, who notes that “in the years preceding 1958, as the war accelerated in Viet Nam, it was the North Vietnamese peasant...who had become, for many French militants, the figure of the working class.”⁶³ Not only did the student leaders draw upon the intense opposition to United States imperialism, they used the disruptions at Nanterre as a laboratory to test the various vehicles of creating free spaces for dissent. It was as though the more the students succeeded in exercising their freedom, the more they recognized that the boundaries of oppression could be shattered.

⁶¹ Feenberg, Andrew & Jim Freedman. *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: The French May Events of May 1968*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, 4

⁶² Cohn-Bendit, 26.

⁶³ Ross, 81.

Resistance, even resistance that leads to action, cannot be seen as critical unless it is enacted within an emancipatory framework outside of the boundaries established by the oppressive forces. An emancipatory framework must begin by acknowledging the identity prescribed for any oppressed group by its oppressor. This critical self awareness is the first step in constructing resistance.

There are 500,000 of us; sometimes treated as mere children, sometimes as adults. We work, but produce nothing. Often we have no money, but few of us are really poor. Although most of us come from the bourgeoisie, we do not always behave like them...some of us are destined to control the nation, others will become poorly paid intellectual hacks—but every one of us is privileged for all of that.⁶⁴

This rejection of identities and roles prescribed by others in the construction of dissent was not directed only at the forces of oppression. The students also rejected the model of resistance that had been adapted by other Leftist groups who formed traditional political parties. The students believed that such structured action was limiting in its ability to effect change.

We push our refusal to the point of refusing to be assimilated into the political groups that claim to refuse what we refuse. We refuse the refusal programmed by institutions of the opposition. We refuse that our refusal be tied up and packaged.⁶⁵

For many theorists, the distinguishing characteristic of the events of May 68 lies in the fact that it represented a unique convergence of two normally divergent groups, the students who as noted by Cohn-Bendit represented the bourgeois class, and workers who in traditional leftist theory represent the proletariat class. As Ross points out,

Among the insurrections that were occurring across the globe in the 1960s, notably in Mexico, The United States, Germany, Japan and elsewhere—only in France...did a synchronicity or “meeting” between intellectual refusal of the reigning ideology and worker insurrection occur.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Cohn-Bendit, 38.

⁶⁵ Ross, 77.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 74.

It is tempting for reactionary voices to describe the radical transformation that occurred when the workers called a general strike that followed the student demonstrations as simply another situation where dissatisfied workers and equally dissatisfied students come together to disrupt society in the service of their own individual aims--a kind of festival of the nihilists. In fact, there was an underlying moral principle that united the students and workers, a “thematic of equality” which Ross describes as

overcoming the separation between manual and intellectual work, refusing professional or cultural qualification as a justification for social hierarchies and systems of political repression, refusing all delegation, undermining specialization—in short, the violent disruptions of assigned roles, places, or function.⁶⁷

This temporary suspension of class boundaries, the conflation of intellectual and manual labor, and the willingness on the part of workers and students to, for a brief moment, envision a new way of constructing power relationships—where the good of the many really does outweigh the good of the few—constitutes this series of events as critical resistance. The resistance was emancipatory in that it negated the existing definitions of freedom as delineated by the dominant and oppressive forces in the society. It negated existing power relationships and formed new, mutually beneficial ones.

Daniel Singer suggests that the remarkable factor about this new relationship is best understood from the perspective of the French working class. After all, it is not unusual for students to revolt, and even Cohn-Bendit acknowledges that each generation has been characterized by the opposition of the younger generation to the values and morals of the older. Yet, as Singer notes, the French working class “had been nothing, it could be everything, it wanted to be something.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁶⁸ Singer, 11.

In the end, of course, the French government did not fall. The threat of additional violent military interventions into the civic spaces of the nation mobilized the French population to willingly relinquish even more of their freedom at the ballot box. However, the true defeat came not with guns and tanks, but in the revisionist reframing of May 68 as merely student unrest or youth-driven cultural transformation. Ross has taken the quite different view, that the extraordinary government response to the demonstrations can best be understood not in the context of the actions of the students or even the responses of the workers, but by the threat of the potential synthesis of power that could erupt if the coalition between these groups could be sustained.⁶⁹ The students and workers knew this and it is their willingness to enact such a partnership, and their ability to imagine its possible consequences, that situate these events firmly within the framework of critical resistance.

The tendency to either romanticize or demonize May 68 is evident in the scholarship that even today emerges around the topic. The discourses that attempt to explain the events of that volatile period seem to be governed either by aging radicals who write commemorative tropes or by reactionary critics who trivialize and demean the events. In attempting to frame a new definition of resistance, it may be more productive to examine the role that constructed boundaries of difference play in serving as a deterrent to the kind of inter-class coalitions that formed during the events of May 68. This could lead us to consider the possibility that these boundaries are devised as a strategy to facilitate the fetid workings of an oppressive system, and that the barriers between us exist, like the structures of Foucault's Panopticon, in the service of the few with the consent of the many.

⁶⁹ Ross, 68.

3.4 ETHICAL RESISTANCE

In this next section, I will explore whether it is possible to operationalize a model of resistance grounded within the framework of a set of moral imperatives. Emanuel Levinas offers the idea of ethical resistance, which he defines not as power resisting power, but as the resistance of the completely powerless.⁷⁰ Levinas, who was trained as a Talmudic scholar, argued that ethical resistance is foundational to the idea of social justice, for “why would power be exerted in the name of social emancipation...if this exercise of power were not the same time a recognition of the obligation to the powerless?”⁷¹

Levinas viewed ethical resistance as manifesting when the subject makes the conscious decision to create an interstitial space between Subject and Other that is inherently ethical because it is filled with welcome and peace.⁷² Levinas turns for a model of such a relationship to Martin Buber’s I/Thou. Buber’s relational definition of Self and Other describes a Subject, the “I,” who chooses to relate to the Other not as the Object, “It,” but rather as an equal, “Thou.” The Buber I/Thou relationship rejects dichotomy, but rather views the Other as a part of oneself, inseparable, and therefore valued. For Levinas, then

It is only in approaching the Other that I attend to myself; it is only in being attentive to the call of the Other that I can become conscious of myself. Commanded by the Other, called to respond, I am conscious of myself as subject to the Other.⁷³

⁷⁰ Hoy, 183.

⁷¹ Ibid., 182.

⁷² Ibid., 155.

⁷³ Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Walter Kaufman. New York: Scribner. Originally published 1937, 1970, 85.

In this moment of transcendence and responsibility, resistance to domination is grounded in an ethical framework whereby one acknowledges an obligation to something or someone greater than oneself. Ethical resistance is distinguished, then, not by the absence of self interest but by the recognition that self interest lies in the well being of others. The Levinas framework is both compelling and treacherous, for it leaves the activist open to charges of embracing the modernist notion of the grand narrative, thereby denying the validity of postmodernism and its “rejection of totalities, universal values, [and] grand historical narratives.”⁷⁴ Eagleton also writes about another modernist notion that is very strongly connected to the Levinas’ conceptualization of ethical resistance, namely the post-modernist rejection of the validity of collective action.

In a world which has witnessed the rise and fall of brutally totalitarian regimes, the whole idea of collective life comes to seem vaguely discredited. For some postmodern thought, consensus is tyrannical and solidarity nothing but soulless uniformity.⁷⁵

Of course, the kind of collectivity that Levinas offers is far from soulless. Rather, it elevates the act of resistance to the realm of the sacred, where the dissenter willingly takes on the role of one who is powerless in society. From this standpoint, with nothing left to lose, the ethics of resistance become clear and the path illuminated.

3.4.1 The Public Intellectual

One form in which this model of ethical resistance manifests can be found in the public intellectual. The idea of the public intellectual is found in the work of Italian Antonio Gramsci, and has been elaborated by others seeking to define the ineffable quality that sets these

⁷⁴Eagleton, Terry. *After Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 2003, 13.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

individuals apart and places them at odds with the dominant patterns of behavior within the social fabric of a society. For Gramsci, “all men are intellectuals...but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.”⁷⁶ The difference has to do with how each individual chooses his or her function in the society. Said describes Gramsci’s notion of the traditional or professional intellectual as those individuals “such as teachers, priests, and administrators [who] continue to do the same thing from generation to generation.”⁷⁷ In most historical contexts, Becker points out, such intellectuals were highly valued. They protected the canon and offered an epistemology that viewed knowledge as stable, steady, and transmittable. In contrast, Gramsci posits the organic intellectuals, those Becker describes as “forever inventing themselves and renegotiating their place on the border zones between disciplines...wedded to no fixed body of knowledge...open to all thought and to the renegotiation of ideas as that becomes necessary.”⁷⁸

Said describes a stark picture of the life of the public intellectual:

The figure of the intellectual as being set apart...a courageous, and angry individual...whose place it is to publicly raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them) to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by a government or corporation and whose *raison d’être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.⁷⁹

Most critically, Said tells us that intellectuals are people who are of their own time.⁸⁰

This signifies that they speak from true experience and function with knowledge and understanding that can only come from having lived under the heavy hand of the oppression which they must now condemn. Such individuals have crossed the boundary between center and

⁷⁶ Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers, 1971, 9.

⁷⁷ Said, Edward. *Representations of the Intellectual*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996, 4.

⁷⁸ Becker, C. The Artist as Public Intellectual. *Education and Cultural Studies: Toward a performative practice*. Giroux, H. & Shannon, P. (Eds.). New York: Routledge. 1997, 19.

⁷⁹ Said, 12.

⁸⁰ Said, 21.

margin, bringing with them the intimate knowledge of the corrupt and perverse systems and structures they are committed to critique. Such activities exemplify the idea that the power of public intellectuals is to “assail the insolence of office, to criticize stale ideas and to keep venturing into new thought.”⁸¹

3.4.2 Émile Zola

In choosing a single historical instance of how the public intellectual engages in resistance, it is compelling to examine the case of Émile Zola, a distinguished scholar and popular novelist in France at the end of the 19th century. Zola played a pivotal role in what became known as the Dreyfus Affair, the events surrounding the court-martial, conviction, and incarceration in 1894 of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army who was falsely accused of treason. Zola’s response established “for the first time in history a new role of social and political activism for writers, artists, and academicians...in fact, it has been said that the term *intellectual* as it is understood today has its roots in the France of the Affair.”⁸² This is primarily because the Dreyfus Affair marked “the first time that intellectuals acted as a self-conscious group in attempting to influence public events.”⁸³

On January 13, 1898, Zola published his now famous “J’accuse” on the front page of the Paris daily *L’Aurore*. In this text, entitled *An Open Letter to the President of the Republic*, Zola excoriates the French government for its participation in the injustice perpetrated on Captain

⁸¹ Howe, Irving. Intellectuals, Dissent, Bureaucrats in *Public Intellectuals: An Endangered Species* edited by Amitai Etzioni. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 2005, 76.

⁸² Kleeblatt, Norman L. The Dreyfus affair: A Visual Record. In *The Dreyfus affair: Art, truth and justice*, edited by Norman L. Kleeblatt, N. L. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987, 1.

⁸³ Suleiman Suleiman, Susan R. The Literary Significance of the Dreyfus Affair. In *The Dreyfus affair: Art, truth and justice*, edited by Norman L. Kleeblatt. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987, 118.

Dreyfus, whose only crime was to be a Jew in a government and a nation where anti-Semitism was a seething wound in the social body. Zola wrote,

But what filth this wretched Dreyfus affair has cast on your name...And now the image of France is sullied by this filth, and history shall record that it was under your presidency that this crime against society was committed...So shall I dare to tell the truth, for I have pledged to tell the full and complete truth if the normal channels of justice failed to do so. My duty is to speak out; I do not wish to be complicit... I have but one passion: to enlighten those who have been kept in the dark, in the name of humanity which has suffered so much and is entitled to happiness. My fiery protest is simply the cry of my very soul. Let them dare, then, to bring me before a court of law and let the enquiry take place in broad daylight! I am waiting.⁸⁴

Zola's words certainly fall within Said's description of the role of the public intellectual as one who is willing to "to tell the truth to power."⁸⁵ It is also important to note that Zola's resistance is grounded in both a deep understanding of the implications of the government's actions and also in his deep loyalty to that nation he has so fiercely taken to task. Contrary to the propaganda generated by oppressors, there is truth in Howard Zinn's contention that dissent is the ultimate expression of patriotism.

While some people think that dissent is unpatriotic, I would argue that dissent is the highest form of patriotism. In fact, if patriotism means being true to the principles on which your country is supposed to stand, then certainly the right to dissent is one of those principles. And if we exercise that right to dissent, it's a patriotic act.⁸⁶

Ethical resistance can be seen as a complex paradox. It certainly represents a choice made by an individual in full control of his or her agency. At the same time, there is an aura of inevitability that emanates from an individual who recognizes, with perfect clarity, the imperative of acting in concert with foundational principles of ethical behavior. For Zola, the difference between right and wrong was so clear that there was no choice but to act on behalf of

⁸⁴ Zola, Emile. "J'accuse." *L'Aurore*, January 13, 1898. <http://chameleon-translations.com/sample-Zola.shtml>, 1898.

⁸⁵ Said, 8.

⁸⁶ Zinn, Howard *Artists in Time of War*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004, 235

one who had been a victim of grave injustice. In the end, Zola's efforts mobilized others and led to the justice he sought. Yet such efforts do not always succeed. To speak of the courage and nobility of one who speaks the truth to power at great personal risk opens the door to charges of a utopian worldview where resistance becomes subsumed in the romantic myth of the tragic hero.

Even more insidious is the notion of ethical resistance enacted by public intellectuals as potent only when it manifests within the context of a unique situation. Since they are often acting alone and in response to particular circumstances, they can be seen as ineffective in enacting fundamental change in the structures of domination. Yet the alternative is to reject one's own moral compass and embrace the calming balm that resistance is futile—the ultimate self delusion extended as a lifeline to the vanquished. There is another way, and that is to encounter and then embrace the possibility of practice of resistance that functions within a framework of liberation.

3.5 CULTURAL RESISTANCE

3.5.1 Pablo Picasso and *Guernica*

What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only eyes if he is a painter, or ears if he is a musician, or a lyre in every chamber of his heart if he is a poet, or even, if he is a boxer, just his muscles? Far, far from it: at the same time, he is also a political being, constantly aware of the heartbreaking, passionate, or delightful things that happen in the world, shaping himself completely in their image. How could it be possible to feel no interest in other people, and with a cool indifference to detach yourself from the very life which they bring to you so abundantly? No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Pablo Picasso in Martin, Russell. *Picasso's War: The Destruction of Guernica and the Masterpiece that Changed the World*. New York: Dutton, 2002, 1.

It began in a fairly routine way. In January 1937, Picasso, who was already acknowledged to be one of the world's greatest artists, was visited by a delegation from Spain's newly elected Republican government. The representatives hoped to convince the artist to create a new mural for the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 World's Fair in Paris. Initially, Picasso was not drawn to the idea of the commission. The space was enormous, and he was reluctant to become immersed in the political turmoil surrounding the rebellion by Spain's anti-fascist forces against the regime led by General Francisco Franco. Besides, Picasso recognized that "the mural necessarily would be something of an overt piece of propaganda—and the great Picasso was not a poster artist, after all."⁸⁸

Then on April 27, 1937, as the people of the Basque town of Guernica in northern Spain were engaged in their normal daily activities, the town came under attack by the German war machine. Over a period of three hours, the Luftwaffe, under orders from Franco, bombarded Guernica with high-explosive and incendiary bombs. Townspeople were cut down as they ran from the crumbling buildings, Guernica burned for three days, and sixteen hundred civilians were killed or wounded. George Steer, an eyewitness, wrote in the *New York Times* on April 28, 1937,

Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques and the centre of their cultural tradition, was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent air raiders...In the form of its execution and the scale of the destruction it wrought, no less than in the selection of its objective, the raid on Guernica is unparalleled in military history. Guernica was not a military objective. A factory producing war material lay outside the town and was untouched. So were two barracks some distance from the town. The town lay far behind the lines. The object of the bombardment was seemingly the demoralization of the civil population and the destruction of the cradle of the Basque race.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Martin, 2.

⁸⁹ New York Times, April 28, 1937

Picasso learned of the massacre in the French press, and while he did not speak out, he began to make sketches that were based on the images printed in French and Spanish newspapers.⁹⁰ The result is *Guernica*, a monochromatic mural of monumental size, 11 feet high by 23 feet long. Endless iconographic analysis has been carried out to attempt to put into words the meaning of the painting. The viewer sees a room devastated by an act of madness, while people and animals writhe in unspeakable horror and suffering. One woman holds the body of her dead child and screams silently to an unhearing universe, while another is engulfed by the flames of war from above and below. While some art historians see the floating arm holding a lamp as a symbol of hope, others have refused to romanticize Picasso's statement and see in the images only the starkest representation of the horrors of war.

There is little doubt that *Guernica* has achieved iconic status as a symbol of resistance to war. This is evidenced by the fact that on February 5, 2003, when U.S. Secretary of State General Colin Powell came to the United Nations to make a case for the invasion of Iraq, the UN placed a blue cover over a tapestry reproduction of *Guernica* that had been on display since 1985. Despite public pronouncements that the covering provided an appropriate background for the camera, artists around the world spoke out in the face of this unconscionable act of censorship.

The censoring of Picasso's mural is illustrative of art's immense power. It is a civilizing force that erases national boundaries and strengthens human solidarity. In particular Picasso's masterwork continues to aim a laser beam focus on the madness and inhumanity of war, a message that transcends the barbarity suffered by a small Basque village in 1937. As Picasso himself once said, "Art is a lie that tells the truth." The artist's profound mural still speaks the truth to the people of the world, so much so that the powerful feel compelled to censor it.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Martin, 39.

⁹¹ Vallen, Mark. Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* censored at the United Nations. *Art for change*. <http://www.art-for-a-change.com/News/guernica.htm>, 2003.

Stories are told that during World War II Picasso suffered some harassment from the Gestapo in Nazi-occupied Paris. One day, an inquisitive German officer, coming into Picasso's apartment, noticed a photograph of *Guernica* lying on a table. "Did you do that?" he asked Picasso. "No, you did," said Picasso.⁹² It is hard to discern whether the anecdote is true, as it is difficult to know with absolute certainty that any work of art has true impact as an act of resistance.

3.5.2 Cultural Resistance as Critical Resistance

To attempt to define the parameters of how cultural expressions can be situated within the discourse of critical resistance, Duncombe offers the notion of Cultural Resistance, defined as creating culture that is "used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and/or social structure."⁹³

Cultural Resistance begins with a willingness to awaken from the false reality of an individual's current circumstances. This awakening can provide a form of free space for developing ideas and practices. Freed from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture, you can experiment with new ways of seeing and being and develop tools and resources for resistance.⁹⁴

The term *Borderlands* has been used to capture the liminal space created as a parallel, autonomous world—that where the power relationships inherent in the dominant culture become irrelevant. Artists and writers have experimented with the notion of escape from the dominant reality in a variety of forms, ranging from Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* to Guillermo Gomez-Peña's creation of entire communities of *border brujos*, who then populate his installations and theatrical productions.

⁹² Villarreal, Jose. Anecdotes: Pablo Picasso. *Artdaily.org*.
http://www.artdaily.com/section/anecdotes/index.asp?int_sec=114, 2007

⁹³ Duncombe, Stephen. Introduction. In *Cultural Resistance Reader*, edited by Stephen Duncombe. New York: Verso Publications, 2002, 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

The notion of cultural resistance embraces definitions of dissent that include both passive and active forms. Cultural expressions can include overt acts of civil disobedience as well as more subversive insurgencies in the form of subtle jabs at the source of power. There is something exhilarating in the notion of the overt acts of revolt. But for those who live in the nexus of oppression, such actions call upon the coalition of the willing to embrace and accept various forms of sacrifice.

In the midst of the culture wars of the early 1990s, the director of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) revoked solo performer fellowships from four artists—Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, John Fleck, and Karen Finley. At a time when conservatives had charged many artists with “obscenity” in response to their works’ focus on sexuality and the body, these four artists stood out for their vivid explorations of these themes. Labeled the “NEA Four” by the news media, the four artists sued the federal government for violation of their first amendment rights to free speech. Between 1993 and 1996 both district and circuit courts found in favor of the artists and ordered the government to reinstate the full amounts of their grants and to compensate them for all legal fees. In 1998, however, the Supreme Court overturned part of the district court’s ruling and reaffirmed the constitutionality of the NEA charter, which since the early 1990s had included a “general standards of decency” clause.⁹⁵

3.5.3 Cultural Resistance as Everyday Resistance

Another strategy lies in what Scott calls everyday resistance: “Everyday forms of...resistance... [are] the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.”⁹⁶ In these small acts of resistance, those who perceive themselves as powerless can regain their humanity by testing the seemingly ubiquitous power of the oppressors. David Trend writes of Michel de Certeau, “who believed in the liberating potential inherent in everyday

⁹⁵ Smith, Ralph A. A Few Words: The NEA Four. Northwest University. <http://dev.nuamps.at.northwestern.edu/NEA/history/history.htm>, 2001, 45

⁹⁶ Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985, 90.

activities...de Certeau argued that resistance was not limited to direct action and economic struggle. Politics also resided in cultural works and forms of expression.”⁹⁷

During an 11-month period in 1979-80, New York artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles executed a performance work called Touch Sanitation, during which she faced and shook hands with each one of the 8,500 New York City sanitation workers while saying the words, "Thank you for keeping New York City alive."⁹⁸

The power inherent in everyday resistance is that it can be so easily disguised as compliance. As such it requires both patience and vigilance, for when engaging in false compliance the dissenter must maintain a high level of awareness against being seduced by the comforts of accommodation. Yet, if successful, everyday resistance can illustrate that when the reign of terror is otherwise engaged, the insurgency can express its imagination unmolested. In this momentary awareness, resistance raises the possibility within the consciousness of the many that the oppressive power of the few is not as invulnerable as it may appear.

In 1991, the Visual Aids Caucus, a group of artists and curators based in New York, in response to the need for a visual symbol to signify the ever-growing AIDS crisis, developed the red ribbon. The ribbon was unveiled at the 1991 Tony Awards with a simple set of instructions. "Cut red ribbon 6 inches in length, then fold at the top into an inverted 'V' shape. Use a safety pin to attach to clothing." The ribbon began to appear at major events and as an adornment that crossed demographic boundaries. In an era of where gay liberation was colliding with fundamentalist rhetoric stating that AIDS was a punishment from God designed to vanquish the gay community, the presence or absence of the red ribbon was a powerful signifier of one's ideology and morality.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Trend, David. *Everyday Culture*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007, 6.

⁹⁸ Morgan, Robert C. Touch Sanitation. In *The Citizen Artist*. Edited by Linda Birnbaum. Gardiner, N.Y. Critical Press, 1998, 55.

⁹⁹ Smith.

3.6 SUMMARY

I began this process hoping to construct a single coherent model that could be used to construct a definition of resistance. Hoy's work provided the initial framework for my analysis in the form of critical resistance, which I chose to use an analytical framework by applying it to the student/worker uprisings in Paris in 1968. Hoy also re-introduced me to Levinas, whose work allowed me to test the efficacy of a model of ethical resistance, a form of dissent grounded in foundational principles and grand narratives. As an emblematic example of ethical resistance, I offered Émile Zola, a public intellectual who was willing to risk everything to act in the name of truth and justice. Finally, Duncombe's concept of cultural resistance allowed me to revisit my work as an art historian and to explore the viability of the arts as a vehicle to foster resistance.

As I move into the narrative chapters of this dissertation, I am reminded of Laurel Richardson's words on the role awakened consciousness can play in establishing the appropriate context for individual or collective action.

My intent is to help construct a consciousness of a kind in the minds of the protagonists, a concrete recognition of sociological bondedness with others, because such consciousness can break down isolation between people, empower them, and lead them to collective action on their behalf .¹⁰⁰

The resistance chronicles that follow were written from within my own critical consciousness, which I recognize is in many ways still nascent, forming and reforming, veering from heady triumphs and excruciating failures and constantly being tested by the toxic reality of a world where seductions and punishments are ever present. The act of writing the next three chapters has offered moments of pure joy tempered by absolute terror; and whenever I found myself falling into the abyss of self doubt, I have been comforted by the words of Alice Walker: "HELPED are those who create anything at all, for they shall relive the thrill of their own

¹⁰⁰Richardson, Laurel. *Fields of Play*. Walnut Creek, CA : Alta Mira Press, 1997, 14.

conception, and realize a partnership in the creation of the Universe that keeps them responsible and cheerful.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Walker, Alice. *The Gospel According to Shug. Temple of my Familiar*. New York: Simon & Schuster. <http://www.fantasymaps.com/stuff/shug.html>, 1990.

4.0 THE TRIAL OF DOCTOR BILL

4.1 PROLOGUE

I cannot recall when I first heard of Bill Ayers. I seem to remember him from the 1960s; but in truth I suspect my memory of Ayers' work in the peace movement has been eclipsed by others whose antiwar activities made the kind of headlines that traveled to the hinterlands of the resistance in Pittsburgh. More recently, I learned of his work as an educational activist and reformer in Chicago; and I found his scholarship on education reform to be rigorous and written from a compassionate and humanist point of view. Of course, I became reacquainted with him during the 2008 presidential campaign, when the Republicans peddled their toxic narratives of deception starring Ayers as the most recent incarnation of the Scapegoat of the Week. During the campaign, I read *Fugitive Days*, Ayers 2001 memoir of his life in the movement; and it resonated as an authentic account of youthful engagement with a cause worth fighting for. The act of writing such a book is to be admired, for few have the courage to expose both the idealism and indiscretions of youth with such powerful honesty and passion.

The reason I wanted to tell Ayers' story was not as an exercise in self-indulgent nostalgia for the 1960s, but rather as a contemporary view into how education reform can be a treacherous business. I also wanted to suggest that those of us who work for change would do well to call upon our friends for help from time to time. To tell this story, I have chosen the dramatic form and the device of a tribunal. I found my inspiration in Elie Weisel's 1979 work, *The Trial of*

God, the story of the Jews of small 17th century Polish village, who were murdered by the officially sanctioned attacks known as pogroms. In his Afterword to the 1995 edition of the play, Episcopal Priest Matthew Fox writes:

Art is the language for expressing the mystical and the prophetic. The prophet appeals not to cognition alone but to the heart, to the gut (where injustice is first felt) and to the imagination, specifically to the moral imagination.¹⁰²

This is what Weisel is asking of the readers, to use their moral imagination to envision how the quest for justice can be integrated into each aspect of everyday life, until it flows without effort into the world. To do so is to choose to be different from what you see around you, and it is by those small choices that you shall be judged.

I have come to learn that Bill Ayers is a quiet and humble man, who would feel great discomfort if he thought I was deifying him for some dramatic purpose; and I have been careful to avoid such foolishness. Ayers speaks of dissent in a strong voice to be sure, but as the play unfolds, we see that he is but one voice among many. The presence of such a chorus of dissent is comforting because Weisel's act of resistance is not at all about putting God on trial, but rather judging humanity for the sins we perpetuate upon each other.

In the play, various witnesses are called upon to testify as to the nature of freedom and resistance. I use the actual words of those who give testimony interwoven with Ayer's words drawn from his speeches and from various texts he has written. I also ask the reader to imagine the works of art and the music that appear in the play. The play references a chart that is projected onto the back wall of my imaginary stage. This projection is called "Doctor Bill's Magical All-in-One Ecology

¹⁰² Fox, Matthew. Afterword in Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God*. New York: Pantheon, 1997, 164.

4.2 BACKGROUND

The Freedom School: It was an unusual and yet noble name for a school, which when it opened in 1956 was known as North Freedom Street Junior High School. If the name had been chosen to honor the democratic ideal that public education should teach all children to strive for freedom, this story may have a more elegant beginning. In fact, the name had a somewhat less uplifting history. The school was located on the corner of Perry Avenue and North Freedom Street in the Perry Hilltop section of the city. Since there was already a Perry High School on the same street, the new building was named after the four-block-long cross street. There was, oddly, no South Freedom Street, so everyone just called the street and its namesake institution Freedom. The street was filled with tiny row houses, which in 1956 were occupied exclusively by white, Catholic families, most of whom worked in the nearby steel mill. At the outset, residents didn't think much about the name of their street or their junior high school, except in the context of the post-war 1950s kind of freedom from Communism that gripped the nation during those years, where the United States was seen as the protector of freedom for all the world. But it's likely that the folks of Perry Hilltop didn't pay much attention to the name one way or the other.

In our story, which takes place more than 50 years after Freedom School was built, we find the Perry Hilltop neighborhood has changed. The houses look somewhat shabby as the once proudly maintained exteriors have deteriorated. There is no evidence of the early morning ritual that for so many years marked the beginning of the Perry Hilltop workday; when long before

dawn, every house opened its doors, releasing a silent stream of men, fathers and sons, who left their homes in the cool morning air to journey to the hell-fires of the steel mill. The mills are long gone now, and most of those who now live on Freedom Street don't remember them. A few of the older residents remain, but they keep to themselves, suspicious of everyone now that the neighborhood is filled with strangers.

As for Freedom School, five years ago the new superintendent of the Public Schools right-sized (a consultant-speak term for closed) the building due to declining enrollment. The few remaining students from the neighborhood were transferred to various schools around the city; and the School Board put the building up for sale. Not surprisingly, no buyer came forward. Then one day early in the summer, the neighbors were surprised to see construction vehicles parked in the football field next to the school building. They watched as over the next several weeks the building was completely gutted, truck after truck hauling away pieces of their community's history. Then new furniture and fixtures arrived—desks and chairs, chalkboards and computers, boxes of books and supplies—all confirming the neighbors' suspicions that Freedom School was about to reopen.

As the final step in the construction, a sixteen-foot chain link fence was installed surrounding the entire building and adjacent land. On the night the fence was completed, Sylvia Kwiatkowski, who had lived on Freedom Street for 35 years, told her husband Ned that she thought the building looked a lot like a prison. Ned was reading the paper and told Sylvia that he didn't think it was likely anyone would build a prison in Perry Hilltop; but Sylvia was still troubled and remarked that she couldn't imagine why they needed such a high, nasty-looking fence to keep kids away from the school. "Maybe it's not keeping them out they're worried

about, maybe it's keeping them in. That's one way to get them to learn." Ned chuckled and went back to his newspaper.

A week later, a small article in that same newspaper reported that Freedom Street Junior High School had been sold to PRENSIO Corporation of Nashville, Tennessee, a national provider of academic and behavioral improvement programs for disruptive and low-performing students. The article went on to say that PRENSIO operates alternative schools in 22 states, mostly in the South, and boasts a highly successful track record for creating orderly, structured environments for the delivery of managed curriculum to a community's most damaged children. As a gesture of friendship and respect for the people of Perry Hilltop, PRENSIO had decided to retain the name of the building, so the new facility would be called Pittsburgh Freedom School.

The story begins several months later. Freedom School is operating at full capacity and each day serves roughly 600 students, grades 6-12, who have been expelled from their neighborhood high schools or assigned to the school by the courts. Once assigned to Freedom School, the student remains there for 180 days, or the equivalent of one school year. As a private corporation, PRENSIO is not bound by the school district's collective bargaining agreement nor is there a requirement that teachers have certification in a subject matter area. The corporation boasts that all of its teachers have a college degree or equivalent and have years of experience in creating an environment that maximizes the opportunity for students to learn and minimizes the potential for disruption. Male and female students attend school in separate wings. State-mandated academic subjects form the foundation of the managed curriculum; there is no art, music, foreign language, or physical education. At first, there were some parents and community activists who protested the entry of a for-profit provider into the educational landscape. But they were quickly silenced by the district's claim that keeping all disruptive

students in one facility would make the schools safer for those who come to school to learn.

“There’s no place in our school for students who choose to disrupt the learning of others,” the superintendent’s spokesperson declared. The community had no counter argument to this claim, and Freedom School opened its doors with little opposition.

The action of the story takes place in the Freedom School Teachers’ Lounge, where a substitute teacher, Doctor Bill, engages with his faculty colleagues. Doctor Bill is viewed with great suspicion by some of the other teachers for his unconventional ideas about education, his mysterious past, and his rather odd name. They see him as a troublemaker—he refuses to post student results on the data wall, calling daily measurements a waste of time; he refuses to embrace PRENSIO’S definition of productivity; and he reminds everyone that students are not products, but human beings with a soul. On his very first day, he removed the PRENSIO slogan posters from his classroom wall and instead tacked to his wall a diagram filled with circles and triangles and mysterious words—all very much against the rules and practically pagan. The diagram was titled *Doctor Bill’s Magical All-in-One Learning Ecology*, and he told his students that the *Ecology* represented a kind of quest that had taken him all over the country, seeking to change how schools worked. There were rumors that the diagram was animated and could change its structure and text depending upon what an individual student was thinking and feeling at any given moment. The PRENSIO administrator suspected that this was hogwash, but there was no doubt that strange things were going on in that classroom.

A few months after Doctor Bill’s arrival, a PRENSIO employee discovers on the Internet that Doctor Bill had participated in the antiwar movement of the 1960s. The Director of Freedom School sees an opportunity to get rid of a disruptive nuisance and circulates a memo to

the faculty that Doctor Bill is to be fired for his radical past. Much to the Director's surprise, the physical education guy objects and asks for a faculty meeting on the issue.

As the Director ponders the request, three strangers appear at the Freedom School main office. They hand him a letter from the District Superintendent saying that they are artists in residence and that they are there to provide the state-mandated 16 hours per semester of cultural exposure to the students at Freedom School. The Director is enraged, announces that the Freedom School students have no interest in culture and that today is a very bad day for visitors to be in the building. He tells the artists that it would be best if they were to find another school where they could entertain the children. The artists seem unperturbed; and after a call to the PRENSIO home office to confirm that he must accommodate the state mandate, the Director capitulates.

The three artists accompany him to the faculty meeting and listen quietly while the physical education guy explains how the charges against Doctor Bill are false, and that he deserves the opportunity to defend himself before being fired. One or two teachers nod in agreement, while another speaks up with a sly glance toward the Director and says that she wants the opportunity to publicly accuse Doctor Bill of his crimes. Others quickly agree and there is much shouting back and forth between the large camp of Doctor Bill accusers and a small group of defenders. Finally, one of the artists in residence asks permission to speak. He suggests a solution to their dilemma by offering to hold a mock trial, where each side could present its case and the faculty as a whole could serve as the jury. He reminds them that this is how things work in a democracy and how very American it would be to settle the dispute in this way.

Sensing an opportunity to publicly flog a troublemaker and document the experience as a professional development activity, the Director voices his support for the idea but demands that

he be allowed to play the role of judge. The teachers agree, as the trial will be a welcome alternative to the monthly PRENSIO-mandated, in-service professional development session on the effective use data-driven instruction as an instrument of classroom management. Doctor Bill agrees on the condition that the court must allow him to call upon any witnesses he chooses.

The artists introduce themselves to the Freedom School faculty and staff as James, Haywood, and Toshi, and announce that Haywood will serve as the prosecutor and that James and Toshi will serve as counsel for the defense. All agree and the trial begins.

4.3 THE TRIAL OF DOCTOR BILL

4.3.1 Characters

Truman, the Director of the Freedom School and the judge in the trial, is a tall, well-built man in his mid-40s, with a full head of salty grey hair and a strong physique. He always wears a well-fitting designer suit and crisp white shirt with a brightly colored power tie, for he believes appearance is critical to control. He is from Nashville, where PRENSIO has its home office, and the cadence of his speech is slow and measured. When he first arrived and was called upon to speak to parents or community members, he would begin in a very formal fashion from behind a desk or podium. Soon, though, he would loosen his tie and say, “Now, I’d like to relax with all of you folks and just talk like we’re sitting on your back porch. Would you all mind if I took off my jacket?” His request invariably elicited only silence, for the people knew that Truman lived in an affluent suburb 10 miles from the city, that he never left the building except to walk quickly to his shiny silver Lexus, and that it was unlikely that any of them would ever see him on either their front or back porch. Lately, on the rare occasions when he speaks to the community,

he reads a prepared statement and then turns the meeting over to his assistant director. Things are not going well for Freedom School, and he's been warned by the home office to turn things around or be prepared for a transfer to a less desirable location, a concept almost impossible for Truman to imagine.

Ruth, the assistant director of the Freedom School, grew up in the city and has a long career in public education. Despite strong academic credentials, Ruth consistently was assigned to serve as the assistant principal but never principal, a situation she attributes to being a strong woman who speaks her mind and who is not prone to be silent in the face of disrespect from children or adults. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on the writings of John Dewey, but she has long ago given up hope of seeing democratic education flourish anywhere except the kingdom of heaven, and by then she will not care. She once described herself to her husband as a good Christian woman who is righteously bitter about public education. So when the offer came to move to the Freedom School, she accepted. It meant more money, great benefits, and an impressive title; as that insipid fool Truman told her in her interview, all she had to do to collect her generous check was to keep these defective children and their teachers in line and stay out of trouble.

Baldwin's title is Director of Physical Education, but there is no gym at Freedom School. Instead, at 6'5" and 260 pounds, he walks around the halls and watches for trouble. He is frequently silent, for his presence is usually enough to keep the children behaving as they should. He mostly ignores the adults, for he finds being in the presence of many of them to be painful to his soul. Truman is slightly afraid of him and has decided that he is somewhat diminished. The students know better, for they recognize Baldwin from seeing him walking the streets of the poorest sections of the city, where he is known as Papa B, the leader of the Sacred Sanctuary of the Poor Congregation, which serves the homeless, the lost, the children of the needle, people

living with HIV and AIDS, and just about anyone who might need the hand of God to lift them from despair.

The CTOs: PRENSIO's operations manual requires that the instructional staff be referred to as "content transfer officers" or CTOs, rather than teachers. To quote the manual,

The term 'teacher' carries negative connotations of a classroom setting where discipline is undermined and structure is abandoned in favor of chaos and disorder. Content Transfer Officers exemplify the efficient and systematic transmission of PRENSIO approved knowledge from the adults to the students without emotional attachment or involvement.

Those who work as PRENSIO CTOs function as simulacrae, manufactured replicas of real teachers who are thrust into the marketplace by large university factories designed to churn out compliant, accommodating life forms that have been created to manage both children and curriculum. The CTOs have relinquished their identity and thus have no names.

The Teachers: Despite Truman's best efforts to enforce PRENSIO'S edicts, there are those at Freedom School who consciously engage their students within a practice of freedom. These individuals embrace and then manifest Hannah Arendt's words into their everyday practice of teaching:

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young is inevitable. And education too is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Ayers, William. Teaching Toward Freedom: Moral Commitment and Ethical Action in the Classroom. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004, 20.

Those who live this belief are the teachers of Freedom School. They are admittedly fewer in number than the CTOs, but they function each day “to challenge the system and take on the problem of change as vocation and calling.”¹⁰⁴ Among the teachers we find:

- **Steven** is the head of the science department at Freedom School. He has a Ph.D. from MIT in advanced quantum mechanics and came to teaching because a Ph.D. in theoretical physics is not marketable in today’s economy. He surprised himself by how much he liked these kids, especially the 11th and 12th graders. When Truman or Ruth aren’t carrying out one of their inspections, he shuts down the managed curriculum drone and lets the students work on computer-based science games he’s written. The kids are amazingly adept and motivated when playing the games, and Steven is secretly working on a new program called Bohm Buster, featuring a quadriplegic superhero who fights evil with simultaneous eruptions of particles and waves.
- **Paul** teaches reading at Freedom School. Paul arrived at PRENSIO shortly after it opened and immediately requested that he be assigned to the “lock-down” corridor where the disruptive students are sent as a punishment. Baldwin is a frequent visitor, and he and Paul sit with the kids and talk about the fathers and mothers of the movement, Malcolm, Ernesto, Angela, Fannie Lou, Ella, Bobby, Huey and all of the others upon whose shoulders they stand. It is rumored that Paul tells his students that social change arises through knowledge, which is waiting to be discovered through the voices of those who came before them and who left a legacy of signs and symbols that show the way to freedom. Literacy, he would tell them, is the key to your liberation. Truman never ventures into lock-down, nor do the CTOs, so Paul and Baldwin call it “Freedom Land.”

¹⁰⁴ Ayers, William. *Fugitive Days: A Memoir*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001, 60.

- **Diana** was hired to teach Introduction to Life Skills, a charge she took most seriously, although it is probable that her definition of skills essential for a meaningful life diverges greatly from the standard PRENSIO definition.

Teaching radiated effortlessly from Diana. There was nothing formal or awkward in it, because it was more an instinct than a plan, more passion than performance...She taught mostly by example and by illustration, by assimilation perhaps, by noticing or witnessing. Her teaching was often invisible or indirect, muted or enigmatic, its shape and substance apparent only slowly. She taught by breathing in and breathing out.¹⁰⁵

When one of the teachers became discouraged, she would urge them to “pay closer attention to our kids, three-dimensional beings, she said, much like ourselves, with hopes, preferences and unique experiences that must somehow be taken into account. If you keep stretching the context...widening the challenges, offering new tools and possibilities, you have a real chance of become effective with kids.”¹⁰⁶ She did, and she was.

The Artists in Residence are three artists who have been assigned to Freedom School to carry out the new state mandate that every student must receive 16 hours of cultural exposure each semester. They look very different from those assembled in the teachers’ room, perhaps younger, perhaps more casual, perhaps a bit out of sync with the times.

Doctor Bill.

The Call Upons, who testify at the trial.

4.3.2 The Stage

The teachers’ room at Freedom School. The room is large and brightly lit, as though with harsh florescent fixtures. There are no windows, and several metal desks and chairs are

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 97.

positioned along the perimeter facing the wall. There is a large work table stage left, which will serve as the judge's bench and which is completely bare, no papers, folders, or books. Several chairs are positioned to suggest a jury box, as well as one which will serve as a witness chair. The rear of the stage is a back-lit projection scrim where a variety of aphorisms appear as the audience enters the theater. Examples are:

PRENSIO Understands the Importance of Discipline, Do You?

PRENSIO Measures Achievement Every Day: Did You Add to the Data Wall Today?

PRENSIO Promises Productivity: Did You Start the Day with the Productivity Pledge?

PRENSIO Delivers Quality: Did You Practice Quality Control in Your Classroom Today?

PRENSIO Promises Safe Schools: Were You in Command in Your Classroom Today?

PRENSIO Knows Who the Obstacles Are: Are You an Asset or an Obstacle?

PRENSIO Believes in Ready-Fire-Aim: Did you OVERTHINK Today?

PRENSIO Practices Time-Boxing: If You Can't Address a Problem in 30 Minutes, Delete It!

PRENSIO Teachers are Contented: Did You Feel Good about PRENSIO Today?

4.3.3 Scene 1 – The Prosecution Presents the Case

As the scene begins, Truman is seated behind the bench and the various teachers are seated to one side as jurors. There are two additional tables in front of the bench, one positioned as the prosecution table where Haywood is seated; and the other for the defendants' team where Doctor Bill, Toshi, and James have taken their places. There is a chair for the witnesses, and the back projection wall is completely empty but shimmers with light.

Truman

I call these proceedings to order and I thank you for joining us at a PRENSIO professional development opportunity, the Trial of Doctor Bill. Will the clerk please read the charges:

One of the CTOs

The charge is gross insubordination and resistance to authority as manifested by:

- Failure to adhere to data wall requirements,
- Failure to conform to the tenets of the Productivity Pledge,
- Failure to comply with the requirement to be in total control at all times,
- Failure to punish transgression; and most egregious of all
- Failure to extinguish freedom of movement in the halls and classrooms.

As the charges are read, text is projected on the scrim capturing the essence of each charge:

- Failure to adhere
- Failure to conform
- Failure to comply
- Failure to punish
- Failure to extinguish freedom

The CTO points to Doctor Bill and hisses,

There is also the matter of his past, a wicked and dangerous past.

This man was a radical revolutionary in the 1960s, a protestor, a radical, a member of the Weather Underground.

Truman

Does your client understand the charges brought against him?

James

Yes, your honor.

Truman

How do you plead?

Doctor Bill

I am guilty, Truman.

Truman (flustered by the familiarity but not wanting to take on Doctor Bill)

Prosecution, present your first witness.

Haywood

I present *Doctor Bill's Magical All-in-One Learning Ecology*.

The Ecology appears on the scrim on the back stage wall.

Around the perimeter, there is a series of circles within circles, each carrying multiple words:

Social Justice Worldview, Human Centered Practice, Moral Choice, Curriculum, Learning

Environment. Emanating from a central circle, in which we find the words "Students, Teachers,

Families," are eight bars, each filled with words including Seeing, Counseling, Listening,

Caring, Supporting, Persuading. In the triangles between the eight bars are even more words

that describe what happens in a Human-Centered classroom.

Haywood

Your honor, this is the kind of education Doctor Bill is fostering at Freedom School. Words like Questioning, Interpreting, Imagining, Choosing.

He steps in front of the Ecology and words begin to move from their original places in the

diagram and to travel across the screen at an increasingly rapid rate. Ultimately the signs and

symbols blur, losing their individual identity until they appear as beams of colored light. As

Haywood moves closer, the words settle down until the diagonal bars emanating from the center circle contain the words BELOVED, BROTHER, DEFENDER.

Haywood

Thank you. May I demonstrate further? Miss Ruth, may I ask you to stand in front of the Ecology?

Ruth rises and slowly walks to face the projection. Again, the ecology transforms as the words and shapes move quickly into new configurations in a dance of letters and symbols, finally revealing the words RESPECT, PRIDE, FAITH.

Haywood (helping a somewhat surprised Ruth back to her seat)

Thank you, Miss Ruth. You see, your honor, it changes depending upon who is standing before it. It's almost as though it can see you as you really are rather than labels others use to define you—it's unnatural. Would your honor like to come down and try it?

Truman (uncomfortable)

I would not. Call your next witness.

Haywood

I call one of the CTOs to the stand.

One of the CTOs stands and marches in an almost military posture to the witness chair, casting a conspiratorial glance at Truman before taking the seat.

Tell us what you know about the defendant's past.

CTO

Well, I was looking at Doctor Bill's personnel file, and I found his real name is Bill Ayers and that he is a dangerous terrorist who...

James

I object. Your Honor, how did this witness get Doctor Bill's personnel file?

Truman

Objection overruled. I gave it to her. These are treacherous times, and the Patriot Act says that I'm a patriot and I can do whatever is necessary to do to protect this nation. What did that great American hero Ronald Reagan always say? "By any means necessary!"

In the jury box, Baldwin, shakes his head in disbelief and seems to rise a bit out of his chair as if to speak but instead falls back into his seat, dejected.

Truman (turning toward the witness with a not quite lecherous smile)

Continue, my dear.

CTO

Well, imagine my surprise, when I found out that he had published a secret book called *Fugitive Days*, in which he reveals himself to be a man with a past who had perpetuated violence against the United States as a member of the antiwar protest group the Weather Underground.

James (standing)

Your Honor, first of all, what the witness is calling a violent past took place during a time when thousands of young people were resisting what they believed to be an unjust and illegal war.

Secondly, I hate to contradict the witness, but this book is by no means a secret—why, I purchased my copy on Amazon for \$24.00.

Truman

Well, I certainly didn't know about it and neither did the PRENSIO home office I can assure you. Since you didn't officially object, I can't overrule you, so instead I'll just tell you to sit down.

James sits and looks at Doctor Bill, who pats his hand and smiles.

CTO

He was a terrorist. I heard it on the television and read it on the Internet. He belonged to a group that tried to blow up the Pentagon and a New York Police Station. Here we are at our very own Freedom School, and we had a real terrorist in our midst and no one was doing anything about it. It was my duty to inform people of the truth, so I went to Truman and told him what I'd found.

Haywood

Thank you very much.

Truman

James, do you have any questions?

James

Did you ever ask Doctor Bill about the book and about the Weathermen or his antiwar activities?

CTO

I did not.

James

Did you read *Fugitive Days*?

CTO

I did not. I am a true and loyal American and I would not read anything that is negative about our great nation.

James

Can you please tell the Court what you know about Viet Nam.

CTO (somewhat flustered)

Well, it was a war fought a long time ago.

James

Actually Viet Nam is a nation, not a war, but let's move on.

Why was the United States fighting that war and with whom were we fighting?

CTO

Well, I'm sure I have no idea, but if our country was fighting, it had to be for a good reason.

James

I'm sure that must be true. I'm almost finished now. What was your major in College?

CTO

What does that have to do with anything?

Truman

Just answer the question, dear.

CTO (petulantly)

Physical Education.

James

And what do you teach here at Freedom School?

CTO

I teach grades 9-12 Social Studies and History.

James

I am finished with this witness, Your Honor.

Truman

You may call your next witness, Haywood.

Haywood:

I call one of the other CTOs.

Another of the anonymous faculty takes the stand.

Haywood

Has Doctor Bill been a good colleague to you since you arrived at PRENSIO?

CTO

Oh yes, he is so kind; and he is very helpful to the new CTOs, like myself.

The other CTOs laugh until Truman bangs his University of Tennessee mug which is serving as a gavel.

Haywood

What I mean is did he follow the PRENSIO rules?

CTO

Oh. Well, he refused to recite the PRENSIO Productivity Pledge.

Haywood

Please recite the pledge so we can know the depravity of the refusal.

CTO

We, the...

Truman, glaring at the faculty, gestures for them to stand, which they do, although reluctantly.

James and Toshi stand, Doctor Bill does not.

Haywood

Please continue.

CTO

We, the employees of PRENSIO Freedom School, do solemnly pledge:

To those who come through these doors damaged and imperfect, we will repair them
until they are prepared to join a fully trained workforce poised and ready to make
America strong throughout the world.

To those who resist, we will act firmly and swiftly so that they can embrace the one true way to learn.

To those who comply, we will offer the endless rewards of the American dream.

To those who lack character and self control, we will rehabilitate and re-educate them using every tool in the PRENSIO toolbox.

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| The Three Ds | Data, Discipline, Determination |
| The Three Ss | Standards, Structure, Sequencing |
| The Three Rs | Rigor, Respect, Results |
| The Three Ps | Preparation, Performance, Perfection |
| The Three Ms | Manage, Maintain... |

James (interrupting)

Stop, Stop. Your Honor, we stipulate that the pledge is alphabetically infinite and that Doctor Bill refused to say it for an hour every morning. Just tell the CTO to please stop.

Truman

All right, although the Court would also like you to stipulate that it is a work of incredible verbosity and, ah, would certainly qualify as cultural exposure in some, ah, cultures.

James

So stipulated, Your Honor.

Satisfied, Truman asks Haywood to continue his examination of the witness.

Haywood

Other than refusing to recite the pledge, what else has the defendant done to arouse your suspicions?

CTO

Well, his classroom is unruly and disorderly. There seem to be dozens of separate things going all at once and everyone is permitted to move freely around the room. There are books and paint and clay on the tables and posters of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman on the walls.

Once, I found him making copies of poetry by Langston Hughes, which is most definitely not in the approved curriculum. Another time, I heard one of his telling one of mine that they spent time in Doctor Bill's class writing poetry about themselves and then they engage in something called a poetry slam, which I don't understand but which I know is unorthodox and not permitted. And sometimes, the laughter from Doctor Bill's classroom is so loud that the ones in my classroom begin to laugh as well and that's very disruptive.

Haywood

Thank you.

Truman

Does the defense have any questions for this witness?

James

How do the students feel about Doctor Bill?

CTO

I don't know.

James

Have you ever asked them?

CTO

Of course not. We don't speak to them about such matters.

James

Do students seek him out after school or between classes? Do they like to spend time in his classroom? Do they smile at him when they see him in the hall? Do they seem happy when they are with him?

Truman

I object to this entire line of questioning. These questions are irrelevant, immaterial, and...(Truman struggles to find another "i" word to finish his thought when Haywood interrupts him.)

Haywood

Truman, you are the judge, I don't think you can object.

James

That's all right, we are finished. Thank you.

Haywood

The prosecution rests, your honor.

Truman

What a relief. All right, let's break for lunch and return at 1:00.

4.3.4 Scene 2 - The Defense.

Toshi rises from the table to begin to present Doctor Bill's defense.

Toshi

We call Ruth, the assistant director to the stand.

Ruth moves from her seat adjacent to the jury and sits in the witness chair. Her demeanor and posture are somewhat hostile.

Toshi

Good afternoon, Miss Ruth. Thank you for agreeing to testify today.

Ruth

I agreed to nothing. I wanted no part of this foolishness. (*glaring at Truman*)

Toshi

Well, thank you anyway. (*She returns to the defense table, picks up a book, and hands it to*

Ruth)

Miss Ruth, do you recognize this book?

Ruth

Yes I do, it's Holy Scripture, the Word of God. I hope you are not planning any blasphemy today, missy, or you will have to contend with me.

Toshi

No, ma'am. No blasphemy from me today or any other day. My mother raised me to be respectful.

Ruth

See to it that you continue to listen to your mother.

Toshi

Yes, ma'am. Miss Ruth, will you please open the Bible to the passage I've marked and read it to the court.

Ruth (begins reading)

Isaiah 58

Is not this what I require of you...:
to loose the fetters of injustice,
to untie the knots of the yoke,
to snap every yoke
and set free those who have been crushed?
Then shall your light break forth like the dawn

And soon you will grow healthy like a wound newly healed...
If you cease to pervert justice,
To point the accusing finger and lay false charges,

Ruth pauses for a moment and then puts down the Bible and continues from memory.

If you feed the hungry from your own plenty
And satisfy the needs of the wretched,
Then your light will rise like dawn out of darkness
And your dusk be like noonday...
The ancient ruins will be restored by your kindred
And you will build once more on ancestral foundations;
And you shall be called the Rebuilder of broken walls,
Restorer of houses in ruin.¹⁰⁷

Toshi

Thank you, Miss Ruth. Those are very important words for us to consider.

Ruth

Always, child, always. (*Ruth appears lost in her own thoughts*)

Truman

Haywood, do you have any questions for this witness?

Haywood

No, your honor.

Ruth steps down slowly and returns to her seat, not quite herself

Truman

Call your next witness.

James

I call Diana to the stand.

Diana (taking her place)

Hello, James.

¹⁰⁷ Isaiah: 58 in Ayers, William. *A Kind and Just Parent*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997, 45.

James

Hello Diana. How did you meet Doctor Bill?

Diana

He came into my classroom one day and gave me a book, *Blindness*, by the Portuguese Nobel Laureate José Saramago.

James

Did he say why he gave you that particular book?

Diana

He said that I reminded him of one of the Saramago's characters, the Doctor's Wife. I took the book home and stayed up all night reading. It was a life-changing experience.

James

How so?

Diana

After I finished the book I found that I was seeing things, the ordinary things that constituted my life, in a new and quite remarkable way.

James

Would you like to tell us what specifically in the book changed your view of the world so dramatically?

Diana

No, James. It's time to call upon *her* to tell you.

She turns to the Ecology

We call upon the Doctor's Wife.

The projected Ecology diagram fades away and in its place is the face of a very ordinary woman, someone you could walk by on the street or sit next to on the subway and never recall. We see her, but we don't see her because in a way she is exactly like everyone else we see. Later, when those present are asked to describe her, no one can remember her face.

James

Please state your name for the Court.

Woman

I am the Doctor's Wife.

James

Where are do you live?

Doctor's Wife

I was created by José Saramago for his book *Blindness* and it is there that I dwell until someone chooses to pick up the book and read it. Then I dwell inside the memory of the reader.

James

We have called upon you to give testimony today. Are you ready?

Doctor's Wife

I am.

James

Please begin.

Doctor's Wife

As Saramago created us, my husband, an ophthalmologist, and I live in a large city. Without warning, we find ourselves in a time of great affliction, when the people are plunged into blindness, but rather than darkness it is whiteness so luminous, so total, that it swallows up,

rather than absorbs, not just colors, but the very things and beings.¹⁰⁸ They named it the white evil and they tried to quarantine the victims but it was to no avail. Ultimately, I alone, among the great masses of people, could see, and we all lived in the harsh, cruel, implacable kingdom of the blind.¹⁰⁹

James

Then what happened?

Doctor's Wife

In such a kingdom as this, I was tortured by my sight as I watched the erosion of that which makes us human. There was theft, murder and rape as civility and order collapsed all around me. I told the blind ones in my care, 'if we cannot live entirely like human beings, at least let us do everything in our power not to live entirely like animals.'¹¹⁰

James

Did the blind ones know that you alone could see?

Doctor's Wife

At first, I hid my sight for I could not even bear to think of the consequences that would ensue if it were to be discovered that I was not blind. I was afraid, but in the end, I told them. The horrors continued and I came to a point of despair when I asked, for what use is my eyesight? It exposed me to greater horror than I ever imagined. It convinced me that I would rather be blind, nothing else.¹¹¹

James

Did you have the choice to become blind like the others?

¹⁰⁸ Saramago, José. *Blindness*. Translated by Giovanni Pontiero. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1995, 17.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

Doctor's Wife

No. It was entirely out of my hands. My fate was to see.

James

Then what happened?

Doctor's Wife

One day, people's vision began to return. Those who had become blind first could see first.

Soon all is as it was.

James

Thank you.

Haywood rises from the table and turns to the Ecology.

Haywood

Just one question. Why did they all become blind?

Doctor's Wife

We did not know, but we learned that fear can cause blindness—many of us were already blind the moment we turned blind. Fear struck us blind, fear will keep us blind; and we finally began to wonder how many blind persons are needed to make a blindness.¹¹² In the end, my husband said, 'I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see.'¹¹³

Haywood

Thank you.

The Doctor's Wife slowly fades and is gone.

Haywood turning back to the witness.

¹¹² Ibid., 128.

¹¹³ Ibid., 326.

And thank you, Diana.

Diana

Thank you for coming, Haywood.

Truman (who is beginning to become frustrated)

Call your next witness.

James

I call upon Maxine Greene to speak before the Court.

So conjured, she appears.

She is a small woman who bears the inevitability of advancing age with grace and dignity—a slight bending of the back, a twist and tremor in the fingers and a wickedly receding hairline where once there was an abundance of thick, dark, curly hair. Her face is lined, yet the features remain unique, etched with ethnicity and plainness that have evolved into great beauty. Her distinctive voice is raspy, with strong strains of Brooklyn announcing a life story and a particular way of being in the world.

She speaks.

Maxine

Hello, James.

James

Hello Maxine. So nice to see you. Please introduce yourself to the court.

Maxine

I am Maxine Greene. *(She looks around, making eye contact with each individual.)*

This is a very serious thing you are doing today, this trial.

James

Yes, Maxine, it is.

Maxine

May I begin with a poem?

James

Of course.

Maxine, reciting from memory.

Adrienne Rich writes...

But there come times—perhaps this is one of them—
When we have to take ourselves more seriously or die;
When we have to pull back from the incantations,
Rhythms we moved to thoughtlessly,
And disentrall ourselves, bestow ourselves to silence
or a severer listening, cleansed of formulas,
oratory, choruses, laments, static crowding the wires.¹¹⁴

She looks around again.

I hope you understand.

James

Maxine, please tell us who you are.

*Maxine*¹¹⁵

I am a teacher and a philosopher. I describe my field of study as lived situations; and my goal is to challenge the taken for granted, the frozen and the bound, and the restricted.¹¹⁶ So you have conjured me to speak about this man you call Doctor Bill, who is also a teacher and who comes to this place to care about and for the children. So I will pull you back from your thoughtless

¹¹⁴ Rich, Adrienne. Transcendental etude. In *Resisting plague: Pedagogies of thoughtfulness & imagination*, by Maxine Green, 2008. The Maxine Greene Foundation. <http://www.maxinegreene.org>, 1984, 1.

¹¹⁵ A footnote indicates that I am using a direct quote from the individual who is speaking either his or her own words or the words of the author whose work is cited.

¹¹⁶ Ayers, William. Doing Philosophy: Maxine Green and the Pedagogy of Possibility. In *Teachers and Mentors: Profiles of Distinguished Twentieth-Century Professors of Education*. Edited by Craig Kridel, Robert Bullough and Paul Shaker. New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1996, 124.

incantations and ask you to take seriously what I am about to tell you. While you are paying close attention to my words, you must also attend to all that I will show you, for I am going to introduce you to a new way of seeing the world. Together we will engage works of art that have the capacity...to begin with the overly familiar and transfigure it into something different enough to make those who are awakened hear and see.¹¹⁷

From within Doctor Bill's Magic Ecology there emerges a beam of light that takes form as an image.

Maxine

This is Pablo Picasso's *Weeping Woman*.¹¹⁸ Do you see her fractured face, torn apart and pleading for Divine intervention? Do you feel the agony beneath her supplication born of despair? But there will be no Divine response to her pain, for the Spaniard is showing us not what God does to man but what men do to each other. It is his homage to those who must mourn the death of our children in the service of the endless war and carnage we bring down upon ourselves.

It has been said that Picasso's paintings of "weeping women" have become the icons of our time. They have replaced the public statues of men on horseback and of men in battle; they overshadow the emblems of what once seemed worth fighting for, perhaps dying for. To see this image, as Picasso provoked us to do, is to become aware of a tragic deficiency in the fabric of life. If we know enough to make those paintings objects of our experience, to encounter them against the background of our lived lives, we are likely to strain toward concepts of a better order of things in which there will be no more wars that make women weep like that, no bombs to

¹¹⁷Greene, Maxine. Introduction: Teaching for Social Justice. In *Teaching for Social Justice*, edited by William Ayers, Jean Ann Hunt, and Therese Quinn, xxvii-xlvi. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997, 129.

¹¹⁸ Picasso, Pablo. *Weeping Woman*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 59 cm x 48 cm. Tate Gallery, London.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=11871>.

murder innocent children. We are likely, in rebellion against such horrors, to summon up images of smiling mothers and live and lovely children...metaphors of what ought to be.¹¹⁹

Maxine looks at the Picasso and then at the jury.

So how can we enact that rebellion against horror and envision what ought to be? What happens to a human being, when the world around you deteriorates and you know in the deepest reaches of your soul that you must act or die? In the end, we are free and fated, fated and free...We are conditioned, entangled, thrust into a world not of our choosing, but also free to understand what is happening to us, to interpret, to envision possibilities, to act against all the determinisms, to repair the deficiencies we find...we can look at the world as if it could be otherwise, and then act on our own freedom.¹²⁰

James

Maxine, do you know Doctor Bill?

Maxine (laughing softly)

Oh, yes. He was my student at Columbia Teachers College.

She looks at Doctor Bill with affection and smiles

Perhaps not my best student at first, but he has done very well indeed.

Maxine continues in a stern voice

In the time of the Viet Nam War, Bill was in the center of a moral crisis, a political crisis and a personal crisis. When this happens, how are we to respond?

¹¹⁹ Greene, Maxine. *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995, 122.

¹²⁰ Ayers, William, 1998a, 6.

Paul Potter, who was the President of the Students for a Democratic Society during long years of the Viet Nam War, would ask this question to those who chose to resist United States policies:

‘How will you live your life so that it doesn’t make a mockery of your values?’¹²¹

Maxine turns toward Doctor Bill and continues.

This man found his answer back in those days of hope and despair. He said,

Every story of rebellion begins as a story of oppression. And every story of oppression starts with cries and groans of unjustified suffering, undeserved harm, unnecessary pain—stories of human beings in chains or under the boot. I threw my lot in with the rebels and the resisters, the anti-mob, the agnostics and the skeptics... I’d been challenged—and I’d challenged myself—to link my conduct to my consciousness and to summon my courage in the service of an ideal... We had refused the world as we found it, and moving beyond dull passivity, launched ourselves as warriors of repair.¹²²

“Look!”

She turns and points her finger at the Picasso’s Weeping Woman still projected on the wall.

Look at the gift Picasso has given us, an image of the face of war from which we cannot hide.

Its very beauty draws you in, color by color, angle by angle until you are so close that you cannot turn away, and you take on her pain as an act of awe and reverence.

Imagine!

She turns her gaze to each of those gathered in the room.

Imagine what you would have done or could have done to ease that woman’s grief? Would you stand idly by or reach out to help her as an instinctive human act of compassion? These

¹²¹ Ayers, 2001a, 61.

¹²² Ibid., 66.

questions must be asked and answered in this place and on this day, before you sit in judgment of he who could not be silent in the face of her pain.

Iconic images of the Viet Nam War begin to appear in the Ecology. A voice from the Ecology speaks:

My friend gave me a book of photographs portraying the daily life of Viet Nam. The people leapt off the pages at me, vibrant and alive, some seeming as ancient as dragons, others young as the pale sprouts emerging from the rice paddies, all of them cast in a sentimental light, each the object of my growing romance. I don't know why, but after a while I felt that I knew them each individually. Not true, of course, but they felt hyperreal to me, more than human. And I felt the war escalating, which it really was, being waged in my name personally, by young guys I knew who might have been me. I wanted nothing now except to end the war, to end it now.¹²³

In those days, we believed the opposite of moral is indifferent. We found ourselves in a time when the United States was waging a war against an entire population and we were trying to end that war...What it does mean that in that period where 2,000 people a week were being killed by the United States in Viet Nam, we had to ask ourselves what do you do to end that killing, how do you end it, what do you do?¹²⁴

In those early days, I bounced out of bed most mornings wondering how I could live my life that day so as not to make a mockery of my values, how I might embody justice and enact democracy. I think we were all fueled by a shimmering vision of a democracy that would be participatory, a society free of racism, a planet at peace and full of justice—a state of affairs I

¹²³ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁴ Ayers, William. Freedom Schools--An Exchange: Freedom Project History.
<http://billayers.wordpress.com/2008/03/08/freedom-schools-an-exchange, 2008.>

thought we would achieve through love, mainly, through good will, sacrifice, and applied activism.¹²⁵

I threw my lot in with the rebels and the resisters, the anti-mob, the agnostics and the skeptics. The real damage in the world was not being done by them, but by the docile and obedient, the indifferent or the credulous.¹²⁶

I'd been challenged—and I'd challenged myself—to link my conduct to my consciousness and to summon my courage in the service of an ideal...We had refused the world as we found it, and moving beyond dull passivity, launched ourselves as warriors of repair...Our imaginations cracked things open, and the intensity was intoxicating.¹²⁷

Ends with Ho Chi Min Poem

Ho Chi Minh was a warrior and a sage, fighter and poet—the loving activist, the human face of resistance.

Neither high nor very far,
Neither emperor nor king,
You are only a little milestone,
Which stands at the edge of the highway.
To people passing by
You point to the right direction,
And stop them from getting lost,
You tell them the distance
For which they must still journey.
Your service is not a small one
And people will always remember you.¹²⁸

Maxine

Before you stand as accusers, ask yourself what you would have done if you believed the people of Viet Nam were suffering because of actions taken in your name?

¹²⁵ Ayers, 2001a, 61.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 71.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 119.

She pauses.

But I suspect that what you are doing today is not really about what happened all those years ago. I suspect that you sit in judgment of Doctor Bill not for his past, but for his present; not for what many believed to be the righteous resistance of 40 years ago, but for his work today in this building, in his classroom.

I've been listening to what is being said about his transgressions against this school and its systems. What I see is technicism...the bombardment of images from the divinity of Technological Communication that frequently has the effect of freezing people's imaginative thinking.¹²⁹ Maybe that's what you really want. But Doctor Bill refuses to accommodate and chooses resistance instead. You fear him because he is a threat to everything you've been told is right.

In this place, young people find themselves described as 'human resources' rather than as persons who are centers of choice and evaluation. They are, it is suggested, to be molded in the service of technology and the market, no matter who they are. Moreover, as many are now realizing, because great numbers of our young will find themselves unable to locate satisfying jobs, the very notion that all our children will get to participate in this kind of education and that they are human resources means they will carry with them deceptions of all kinds. Perhaps it is no wonder that the dominant mode in many classrooms (if it is not one of cacophony, disinterest, and disorder) is one of passive reception.¹³⁰

But you all know that, don't you? Passive reception is what you've been trained to expect and anticipate, and these students are here because they will not or cannot meet your expectations.

¹²⁹ *Resisting Plague: Pedagogies of Thoughtfulness & Imagination*. The Maxine Greene Foundation.
<http://www.maxinegreene.org>, 2008, 3.

¹³⁰ Greene 1995, 124.

“Cacophony, disinterest and disorder”¹³¹ are the signs and symbols of why these children found themselves in Doctor Bill’s classroom.

She pauses for a moment.

Only beings who can think about the ways they are determined can free themselves...My concern is what can be done by means of education to enable people to transcend their private terrors and act together to give freedom a concrete existence in their lives...My interest is not so much in freedom from or negative freedom as it is in the deliberate creation of the kinds of conditions in which people can be themselves.¹³²

So, I admit that Doctor Bill’s methods may be new to all of you. His Ecology uses language that may be unfamiliar in classroom settings. Its curriculum structures are not at all rigid and managed, but instead seem to shape shift to adapt to the individual needs of each child. Imagine! How radical—and I’m using that term to mean “getting to the root of the issue,” as our dear Ella Baker would say.

*She faces the Ecology’s image of Picasso’s woman and nods quietly as it fades and is replaced by another. She turns back to those assembled as a new image begins to form.*¹³³

Maxine

This is Henry Matisse’s “Dance,” a depiction of human solidarity and abandonment. I call the action of critiquing within a shared context the dance of life. The painting presents an authentic human involvement with others and the natural world; it somehow draws us into the dancers’

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ayers 1998, 5.

¹³³ Matisse, Henri *Dancers I*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 8' 6 1/2" x 12' 9 1/2" (259.7 x 390.1 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York. http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=79124.

movement and suggests the vital networks in which we live or ought to live our lives...We ought to dance to our own pipes, even if we move ponderously.¹³⁴

Suddenly, the image appears on every wall of the stage, as though the painting itself has come alive and begins to dance in ways that combine a clear structure of form and movement with a sense of wild abandon and joy. The multiple images melt into one as the dancers expand their circle until they have surrounded and embraced everyone sitting in the room. Accused and accusers face each other, not as adversaries, but united in their shared suspension of disbelief within the center of the dancing circle. Then it is over and all is as it was.

Maxine

There come times—perhaps this is one of them—when we must move to a pedagogy of imagination, to integrate or bring into relationship the perspectives opened to people freed to think what they were doing. They may be perspectives linked in such a fashion as to provide a shared space for the diverse people, adult and young inhabiting a school...To imagine is to think of things being otherwise.¹³⁵

It is time for me to go. There is no conclusion here—only visions of what might be, what ought to be, what might turn back upon itself, what is not yet.¹³⁶

Maxine nods her head knowingly and is gone.

Truman

Wait, Haywood didn't get to cross examine this witness.

Haywood

I had no questions, Truman. Maxine's testimony speaks for itself, I think.

Truman

¹³⁴ Greene 1995, 62.

¹³⁵ Greene 2008, 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Very well. James, call your next witness.

Toshi stands and calls upon the next witness.

I call upon Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon to give testimony for Miss Ella Baker.

Those assembled hear the music before the Ecology has refocused sufficiently to bring forth the images.

We who believe in freedom cannot rest

We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

One of the singers steps forward.

Bernice

I am Bernice Johnson Reagon and these sisters are my sisters, the members of Sweet Honey in the Rock.

Standing before them are six women of African descent, dressed in robes woven from the light of a long-forgotten sunset lingering over the plains of Western Africa. The women see the world with the clarity and freshness of youth and interpret their visions through the memories of the ancestors. Their sound is a deep in the throat, rhythmic chant expressed in complex seamless harmonies.

Toshi

Thank you for coming to testify.

Bernice

You're welcome, child, you're welcome. Has Maxine been and gone?

Toshi

Yes, ma'am, she has.

Bernice

All right, then. Time to begin.

She turns to those assembled.

Miss Ella Baker sent us to be your *fundi* today. What? You don't know that word? It is a Swahili word which denotes the person in a community who passes on the wisdom of the elders, the crafts, the knowledge...The fundi transfers knowledge in the oral tradition, wisdom handed from one generation to the next.¹³⁷

Toshi

Can you tell us about Miss Ella?

Bernice

Miss Ella was our fundi, our teacher, in the ways of struggle and of justice. She was born in 1906, the granddaughter of a slave who was beaten for refusing to marry a man chosen by her master. She was a brave and bold woman, who spent her life working behind the scenes to organize the Civil Rights Movement through house-by-house organizing, when that was required, and through stirring public speeches, when she was called upon to do so. In 1960, Miss Ella was one of the founders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee or SNCC.

In its charter for SNCC, the founding members wrote,

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence...seeks a social order of justice permeated by love...Through nonviolence, courage replaces fear, love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice, hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice...By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Grant, Joanne. *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998, 143.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

With Ella Baker's guidance and encouragement, SNCC became one of the foremost advocates for human rights in the country. Ella Baker continued to be a respected and influential leader in the fight for human and civil rights until her death on December 13, 1986, her 83rd birthday.

Toshi

Please continue.

Bernice

We are here to be your song-talkers today and we are going to give testimony about freedom. This is Miss Ella's gift to you from her spirit so that you can begin the journey to find yours.

The members of Sweet Honey breathe the words softly.

A gift from the spirit, as it has been, as it is, and as it will be.

Truman (who seems to be a bit bewildered by all of these strange comings and goings)

This is all very nice, but what does it have to do with Doctor Bill?

Bernice

This one you call Doctor Bill followed his conscience long before the United States attacked Viet Nam. There was another conflict at home, where he learned about freedom.

Haywood

The prosecution has no objection to the testimony, Truman. Let's hear what they have to say.

Nothing at all to lose by listening.

Bernice

Thank you, Haywood.

There was a nation within this nation in the 1960s, a nation where people, white and black, refused to tolerate injustice in America. They were nonviolent warriors for justice, young and old, and they faced down racism with courage, with strength, and with righteousness. That

nation within this nation was called the civil rights movement, and young people were at the heart of the movement from its first breath.

The ecology shows us the faces of a series of young people, men and women, white and black.

One of the faces is that of Doctor Bill as a young man. The people in the room gasp when they see him.

Bernice (speaking as the photographs appear on the Ecology)

The Civil Rights Movement in America is the story of courage and heroism, morality and perseverance. It swept us away completely because it demanded everything of us, and because it offered everything to us—high purpose, real work to do, love, dreams, hope. It told us to be ourselves, and it invited us to reach. It required harmony between thought and action, words and deeds. It said the personal is political; don't let your life make a mockery of your values, whatever injustice raises its head, resist; the revolution is your permanent vocation.¹³⁹

Bernice

But Miss Ella did not begin her civil rights work in the 1960s. No, by then she was a veteran of the movement for the rights of the descendents of slaves in North America. Why, in 1945 she went on the radio and talked to anyone who would listen. She told them America cannot hope to lead the peoples of the world to freedom, justice, and equality without achieving for all our citizens a full measure of these virtues...the prevalence of human freedom and peace throughout the world will be conditioned by the extent to which democracy and freedom are enjoyed by all Americans, regardless of race, creed, or color.¹⁴⁰

That was 1945, children, when America was fighting for freedom around the world, with a segregated army and Jim Crow holding people down back home.

¹³⁹ Ayers 2001a, 137.

¹⁴⁰ Grant 1998, 67.

She pauses and looked around at those assembled in the teachers' room.

Seems to me as though we could take Miss Ella's words and put them on the radio today and they would resonate with a truth that could not be denied.

Sweet Honey

Yes, you could. Yes you could.

And a few in the room nodded their heads and whisper:

Yes, you could. Yes, you could.

Bernice

Miss Ella would often tell the story of a man who had a health problem. He was finally told by the doctor that they could save his sight or save his memory, but they couldn't save both. They asked him which he wanted, and he said, 'Save my sight, because I would rather see where I am going than remember where I have been.' Then Miss Ella would say...It's like the whole world is like that now and it is wrong thinking. I always said that in order to see where we are going, not only must we remember where we've been, we must understand where we have been.¹⁴¹

Our testimony today is not about Doctor Bill or even about Miss Ella Baker, it is a story about a movement for freedom, and it's a story some of you must have forgotten because you are not teaching it to these children, either in your words or your actions. In 1964, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee led the effort to break segregation in Mississippi through the creation of Freedom Schools and a massive voter-registration project called Mississippi Summer.

Ysaye Barnwell, another founding member of Sweet Honey begins to speak.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 93.

Yes, the movement knew the value of education and the relationship between education and freedom. Ask yourselves, how many of these children who come here every day to this Freedom School--

Carol Maillard, Sweet Honey founding member number three, interrupts

Freedom School? Child, you have lost your way? This place does not look, feel, sound, or smell like a Freedom School. There are locked doors all around us. Have you seen our children walking down these halls? Why, they turn their faces away from the sun and look down into the darkness, the light behind their eyes has been extinguished, and the laughter has been stolen right out of their souls.

Turning to those present.

You fear these children, and they return the favor. There is no freedom here, none, I would see it, I would feel it. No, no freedom here at all.

Ysaye nods and joins the others in a wordless, harmonic chant filled with centuries of grieving, followed by a silence where only the breaths can be heard.

Ysaye

Beginning in 1961, SNCC worked to get black Mississippians registered to vote, but they faced overwhelming opposition from state and local authorities.

Ruth (standing)

I know this story very well.

She continues

Mississippi was the most segregated state in the nation, and many people believed that the state would never change as long as it remained isolated from the rest of America. If other Americans

only knew what was really happening in Mississippi, SNCC workers believed, then they would join the fight against segregation.

Ysaye

That's right, Miss Ruth. You tell the story. Give your testimony.

Ruth continues

To focus the nation's attention on Mississippi, in 1964, SNCC organized Freedom Summer and hundreds of volunteer college students, white and black, came to Mississippi from all over the country. SNCC activists established the Freedom Schools because they believed in the power of education to transform communities and to create an alternative to the segregated school system that failed to give blacks a meaningful education. To make a Freedom School education meaningful, SNCC devised a curriculum...that emphasized Black History, political education, and citizenship to encourage students to question the system of oppression that kept them poor and isolated. They taught practical skills such as typing, as well as subjects like French that would broaden their educational horizons beyond Mississippi. Throughout the summer, teachers linked what students learned in the classroom to the world in which they lived. The main goal of education according to the Freedom School model was to get people to think for themselves so they could change their own lives.¹⁴²

It was a glorious time—we believed that anything was possible.

Ysaye.

Freedom Schools have a long and rich history in this nation. And here you all are, carrying the name without knowing the glory.

Bernice

There's more to tell,

¹⁴² Ayers 2008.

more tears,
more sorrow,
more hate and
more of Brother Langston's
Dreams Deferred.

Ysaye

During that very Freedom Summer, when James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Mickey Schwerner went to Philadelphia, Mississippi to look at a burned-out church that was to have served as a freedom school, they were kidnapped and murdered by organized racists as a warning to other volunteers: Stay out of Mississippi! The response was the opposite: the killings galvanized the determination, courage, and urgency of the struggle, and Mississippi was flooded with volunteers. At a memorial service for the three, Miss Ella, trembling with anger, cried out: 'Until the killing of black mothers' sons becomes as important as the killing of a white mother's son, we who believe in freedom cannot rest.'¹⁴³

The group begins to sing. At first the teachers look stiff and uncomfortable as the women sing.

Then one or two of them begin to sway side to side in their chairs in time with the music.

Sweet Honey

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.
Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons
Is as important as the killing of White men, White mothers' sons
We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

That which touches me most is that I had a chance to work with people
Passing on to others that which was passed on to me

To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail

¹⁴³ Ayers 2004, 78.

And if I can but
shed some light as they carry us through the gale

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
Is when the reins are in the hand of the young who dare to run against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine on me
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot I've come to realize
That teaching others to stand and fight is the only way our struggle survives

I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard
At time I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.¹⁴⁴

After the last note is sung, there is a long pause while the music echoes in the room. Then

Bernice continues.

Bernice

Miss Ella understood that if the civil rights movement was to succeed, it must change the way society was structured and particularly the way the economic system addressed the needs of its most vulnerable. In a 1969 speech at the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta, she told those gathered that the civil rights movement was now “a struggle for a different kind of society, which will reject, if necessary, the present system.” She spoke about economic inequities, pointing to the inflated defense budget compared to limited funds for the poor.

¹⁴⁴ Reagon, Bernice Johnson. *Ella's Song*. Washington, D.C.: Songtalk Publishing, 1983.

Now is that the kind of system which you can expect to get in and find real value?...In order for us as poor and oppressed people to become part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. This means that we are going to have to learn to think in *radical* terms...I used the term radical in its original meaning, *getting down to and understand the root causes*. It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means with which you change the system.¹⁴⁵

Ysaye

How many of these children live a life where they suffer in silence as the plague of violence flows through the inner cities of this nation? You are their teachers; do you equip them with the skills to survive in their world?

There were those in our history, who looked upon injustice and who name themselves in opposition, moving toward what they hope will be a better world; they define themselves by taking the weight of the world onto their shoulders and by acting on what they know the times demand.¹⁴⁶

Dr. King, Miss Ella, Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer, Dr. Robert Moses, all lived the struggle and vowed each day to face down the most violent forms of race hate. What were their weapons? Dr. King would say righteousness and faith and the content of one's character; and that's true, of course. But there was also the music. By 1962, the music had infused the civil rights movement--not just, "We Shall Overcome," but "This Little Light of Mine" and "We are Soldiers in the Army," "Hold up the Freedom Banner." The Freedom Singers, an acapella group of SNCC folksingers

¹⁴⁵ Grant 1998, 191.

¹⁴⁶ Ayers 2004, 1.

was performing around the South and at Northern fundraising events, singing old gospel hymns and new movement songs they had written. Music banished fear.¹⁴⁷

Bernice

I was a member of the Freedom Singers. In the 1960s, we organized a singing group as part of SNCC as a way to use music to bring the word about the movement to people all around southwest Georgia and ultimately to the people all over the country. In 1963, the Freedom Singers--Cordell Reagon, Rutha Harris, and Charles Neblett--traveled all over the country singing about the movement and raising money to allow the work to carry on.¹⁴⁸

I was born among singing. I don't know of breathing or eating, without singing. I don't mean from the radio (a wonderful invention) or from the iPod (another wonderful invention). I mean singing like walking and talking, like the air you breathe, so you didn't define it in any particular way, because it was woven inside the you you came to know, the house you grew up in, the yard you played in, the school you went to, the church you went to. It was singing by the people around you.¹⁴⁹

Sweet Honey begins to sing

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round,
Turn me 'round
Turn me 'round
Turn me 'round
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round
Keep on a'walkin'
Keep on a'talkin'
Walking up to freedom land.
Ain't gonna let segregation turn me 'round,
Turn me 'round
Turn me 'round
Turn me 'round

¹⁴⁷ Grant, 148.

¹⁴⁸ Bouchard, F. Bernice Johnson Reagon on Freedom Fighting. *Berklee News*, April 9. 2009.
<http://www.berklee.edu/news/634/bernice-johnson-reagon-on-freedom-fighting>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Ain't gonna let segregation turn me 'round
Keep on a' walkin'
Keep on a' talkin'
Walking up to freedom land.¹⁵⁰

Sweet Honey sings the song as they walk around the room, pausing before each of those assembled to sing as though delivering a benediction and a blessing. The cadence of the song is slow, as though the singers are carrying a heavy load but are determined to move it forward. At the end, there are a few moments of silence and stillness, a time for breaths.

Ysaye

Bernice, it's time to call upon Sister Nina to talk about freedom.

Bernice

Let Sister Nina rest, child. There is nothing here that Sister Nina needs to see.

Ysaye

Yes, that's true, but they need to see her. She lived the movement. Her life was the movement's life—it's what they were fighting for. She carried the weight of the sorrow in her soul and it weighed her down, but the music flowed forth through her with a power that could carry you through time and space. Nina needs to speak to these folks. It's time. Call upon her.

Bernice

I call upon Sister Nina Simone.

The Ecology begins by giving us just a soft-spoken voice, coming as though from a great distance, yet filled with power and wisdom. Then the lovely, but sad, face appears.

Nina

Are you talking about freedom? Freedom is just a feeling. It's like how do you tell somebody what it's like to be in love? How can you tell anybody who has not been in love how it feels to

¹⁵⁰ Traditional

be in love? You cannot do it to save your life. You can describe things but can't tell them, but you know it when it happens. That's what I mean by free. I've had a couple of times on stage when I really felt free and that's something else....like, like...I'll tell you what freedom is to me. No fear. I mean really, no fear. If I could have that half of my life, no fear. That's not all of it but it's something to really feel.¹⁵¹

Nina sings

I wish I knew how it would feel to be free.
I wish I could break all the chains holding me.
I wish I could say all the things that I should say
Say them loud, say them clear for the whole world to hear.

I wish I could share all the love that's in my heart
Remove all the bars that keep us apart
I wish you could know what it means to be me
Then you'd see and agree that every man should be free.

I wish I could give all I'm longing to give
I wish I could live like I'm longing to live
I wish I could do all the things that I can do
Though I'm way overdue, I'd be staring anew

I wish I could be like a bird in the sky
How sweet it would be if I found I could fly
I'd soar to the sun and look down at the sea
Then I'd sing 'cause I'd know
How it feels to be free.¹⁵²

Bernice

Bless you and thank you, Sister Nina.

Turning to the jury.

We have been your *fundi*, your teachers today. We have told you the story of Miss Ella Baker and the struggle for human rights and freedom in America. We have shared our sorrow and our

¹⁵¹ Simone Nina Simone - I wish I knew How It Would Feel To Be Free [Video].

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSULgOzARy4&feature=related>.

¹⁵² Taylor, William and Dick Dallas. *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free..* Nashville: PolyGram International Music Publishers B.V., 1967.

jubilant and we have tried to show you what a teacher can be. The fundamental message of the teacher is this: You can change your life. Whoever you are, wherever you've been, whatever you've done, the teacher invites you to a second chance, another round, perhaps a different conclusion...the teacher points to what could be, but is not yet.¹⁵³

Take this gift and give it back to your students. Write the next chapter of the Freedom story. Now, our testimony is given and declared. Let it be so written and remembered.

Toshi

Thank you, Mama.

Bernice

You are welcome, child.

They continue singing as they disappear.

We who believe in Freedom cannot rest.

We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

Truman (who feels the situation slipping from his grasp)

Well, this has been ah, entertaining, but we're running out of time. I still don't see what any of this has to do with today.

4.3.5 Baldwin Speaks

At that point, Baldwin stands up from the jury box and walks over to the witness chair and sits down.

James

Hello, Baldwin. Is it time?

¹⁵³ Ayers, 1998 13.

Baldwin

Yes, son. It's time for me to speak.

Truman (highly agitated, stands up)

This is highly irregular. Members of the jury do not speak. First, Ruth and now you. Highly irregular.

Baldwin

Sit down and be quiet, Truman. I am here to give testimony and I will be heard.

James

We're ready, Baldwin.

Baldwin

There was a letter written a long time ago, from a loving uncle to his newly born nephew. I want to read you a passage from that letter.

The writer begins by indicting the United States:

This is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know and do not want to know it...This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. Let me spell out precisely what I mean by that, for the heart of the matter is here, and the root of my dispute with my country. You were born where you were born, and faced the future that you faced because you were black and for no other reason. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity. Wherever you have turned...in your short time on this earth, you have been told where you could go and what you could do (and how you could do it) and where you could do it and whom you could marry...The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what white people say about you. Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity...We, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, my friend, do not be driven from it; great men have done great

things here, and will again, and we can make America what America must become. It will be hard...but you come from sturdy, peasant stock, men who picked cotton and dammed rivers and built railroads, and in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved an unassailable and monumental dignity. You come from a long line of poets, some of the greatest poets since Homer. One of them said, 'The very time I thought I was lost, My dungeon shook and my chains fell off.'¹⁵⁴

"It is from this position of 'unassailable and monumental dignity,'" *he continues,*

that we tell the story of freedom in America. It's a story we wrote during the Civil Rights Movement and that we struggled to preserve in the Anti-War Movement. We were trying to create a moral space when we cry out against harm. In the face of everything, good will overcome evil...We acted on our faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.¹⁵⁵

He turns his back on Truman and speaks to the assembled faculty.

We are teachers. All of us. I wonder whether we might, then, at the outset, choose to embrace as principle the idea that teaching is for us a humanistic endeavor, that we will stand up for truth and knowledge, liberation and freedom, and against oppression. Truth may elude us, of course, may be found only partially, but our eyes are open, our minds are stretching.¹⁵⁶

Those who testified today were trying to teach us that "from the perspective of a humane or democratic society, the authoritarian approach is always backward, always wrong."¹⁵⁷

What are we teaching these children by the way we treat them? Doors and windows locked, teaching them to recite meaningless drivel that dulls the mind and weakens the spirit. Why do we fear freedom and embrace oppression? Everything we do here undermines the participatory spirit of democratic living, it disrupts community, it aims to destroy independent and critical thought. A functioning, vital democracy requires, in the first place, participation, some tolerance

¹⁵⁴ Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993, 8.

¹⁵⁵ Ayers 2001a, 103.

¹⁵⁶ Ayers 2004, 10.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 9.

and acceptance of difference, some independent thought, some spirit of mutuality—a sense that we are all in this boat together and that we had better start rowing. Democracy demands active, thinking human beings—we ordinary people, after all, are expected to make the big decisions that affect our lives--and in a democracy, education is designed to empower and to enable that goal.¹⁵⁸

As someone once said,

Be careful the things you say, children will listen.

Be careful the things you do, children will learn.

What do they learn by watching the way we behave to them and to each other? Teachers in an open, democratic society must learn to think freely and without fear, to have and to use minds of our own, to discover and to make sense for ourselves without any connecting-the-dots formulas, without bowing or genuflecting to any authority, and without any absolute guarantees whatsoever. This is required of us if we hope to teach students who will continue to develop minds of their own.¹⁵⁹

James

Thank you, Baldwin. Is there anything else you want to add to your testimony?

Baldwin (looking at his colleagues in the jury box)

These three artists asked us to carry out this trial, and we agreed, I think mostly because we couldn't bear to sit through another one of Truman's lectures on data-driven instruction.

(Teachers smile and nod, even the CTOs; all are riveted by Baldwin's words.)

Baldwin.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

But this trial has been about something much more than Doctor Bill. Early on, I came to believe that we were the ones on trial, rather than this very remarkable substitute teacher, this man with a past. No, my friends, if we want to find someone to accuse, we have to look no further than ourselves. It is said that the courtroom is a crucible; in it, we burn away irrelevancies until we are left with a purer product: the truth, for all time.¹⁶⁰ It is time that we take upon ourselves the burden of blame that is our due for the way we have allowed these children to be treated here under the banner of Freedom School. *(he is overcome with emotion)*

4.3.6 Ruth Speaks

Ruth stands up and walks over to Baldwin and takes his hand.

Ruth

I am reminded of a story:

There was a man who lived by the river. He heard a radio report that the river was going to rush up and flood the town. And that all the residents should evacuate their homes. But the man said, 'I'm religious. I pray. God loves me. God will save me.' The waters rose up. A guy in a row boat came along and he shouted, 'Hey, hey you! You in there. The town is flooding. Let me take you to safety.' But the man shouted back, 'I'm religious. I pray. God loves me. God will save me.' A helicopter was hovering overhead. And a guy with a megaphone shouted, 'Hey you, you down there. The town is flooding. Let me drop this ladder and I'll take you to safety.' But the man shouted back that he was religious, that he prayed, that God loved him and that God will take him to safety. Well... the man drowned. And standing at the gates of St. Peter, he demanded an audience with God. 'Lord,' he said, 'I'm a religious man, I pray. I thought you loved me. Why

¹⁶⁰ Snodgrass, Melissa. The Measure of a Man. *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Episode 35, 1989.

did this happen?’ God said, ‘I sent you a radio report, a helicopter, and a guy in a rowboat. What the hell are you doing here?’¹⁶¹

Today, we’ve been sent a prophet, a scholar, a choir of angels, and a poet. What more do you need to do the right thing?

Truman is about to protest, but looks around and thinks better of it. He sits silently, looking down in a posture of what appears to be defeat.

Truman

Does the jury need time to deliberate?

All

No, Your Honor. We have reached our verdict.

The End

¹⁶¹ Sorkin, Aaron. Take this Sabbath day. *West Wing*, 2000. Season 1.

5.0 LETTERS FROM PARIS

5.1 PROLOGUE

The story that follows is crafted as a series of letters to Madame Janet Flanner (1892-1978), whose column “Letter from Paris” appeared in the *New Yorker* from 1925 to 1975 over the signature “Genêt.” Madame Flanner lived an adventurous life which included a husband, two passionate and long-lived lesbian love affairs, and social and intellectual encounters with many of the writers and artists who made Paris the cultural center of the world in the first half of the 20th century. Her “Letter from Paris” is a compelling mix of narrative, gossip, and strongly-held opinions on the state of the history, politics, arts, and personalities that together make up the character of Parisian life over a period of 50 years. Flanner’s texts are more than the mere reportage of a socially connected expatriate, for they are truly love letters to the city and nation she adopted as her home.

I use the genre of personal correspondence to recount my trip to Paris in November 2008 during which I learned how to hear the voices of those whose stories I wanted to tell within this inquiry.

5.2 LETTERS FROM PARIS – A REVOLUTIONARY HOMAGE

5.2.1 Letter 1 – View From the Air

Dear Madame Janet Flanner:

Well, I made it. I'm on the plane about to depart on my first trip to Paris. Such fussing at the airport—shoes off, shoes on, dragging carry-on bags from gate to gate as the airline decides to be coy about which plane they might use to fly us to Paris tonight. An extended, anxiety-producing weather delay just serves to agitate my already jagged nervous system. Please don't think I'm complaining, but the obstacles placed in our path as we attempt to board one of these monstrous machines could dissuade even the most committed traveler. Some days I'd just prefer to be catapulted from one continent to another by a giant slingshot. You should be grateful you only traveled by boat and by train, Madame—far more civilized, I assure you.

Oh my, please forgive my lack of manners. We have not yet been introduced. Bonjour Madame, my name is Jeanne Pearlman, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. I am traveling to Paris to study the student uprisings that occurred in the French Quarter in May 1968. I've been studying this topic for three years to better understand the power of individual acts of resistance in the face of oppression. I believe that if I can understand what happened during these events, which stand as exemplars among modern movements of dissent, it might translate into a model of resistance for those who wish to resist current trends in contemporary public education.

While I have learned a great deal from books, articles, documentaries, and first-person accounts, it has become clear to me that I had to experience Paris for myself, to see the boulevards and cobblestone streets where the events of May 1968 unfolded. Months ago, I promised to myself that I would keep a diary of my travels. But as I sat staring at the blank page

of my lovely new faux-leather journal, I began to feel more than a little self-conscious at the idea of writing to myself about myself.

Then, an idea—I would document all of my experiences in Paris in letters to you! Now please do not protest. Your Letters from Paris published in *The New Yorker* from 1925 to 1975 have been an inspiration to me and to so many others who revel in the intelligence and insight of your prose, which is always well seasoned by tasty tidbits of gossip, irony, and wit. Oh Madame, I know it's presumptuous, but I've been reading your letters for so long that I feel we are practically friends. Please know that I do not presume that you will ever respond across the boundaries of space and time although I will be prepared if you decide to deliver a strong scolding should my letters ever become boring or self absorbed. I promise to tell the truth and to refrain from embellishment except when absolutely necessary.

It is such a comfort to know I'm taking you with me on this journey. You were far more adventurous than I, and I know you will encourage me to be brave and to persevere. It is well past midnight, and they have turned off the lights in the cabin but not before I was visited by a very grumpy flight attendant who offered me the opportunity to spend \$15 to rent a pillow. I politely declined.

Goodnight, Madame Flanner. Thank you for returning to Paris with me. I know we will have a great adventure.

Respectfully,

Jeanne Pearlman

Soon- to-be-world traveler.

5.2.2 Letter 2 – Bernard-Henri Lévy: A Light in Dark Times

Dear Madame Flanner:

After four hours of fitful, pretzel-twisted sleep, I am quite happy to be awake and facing the lovely prospect of a bag full of books to help me pass the long hours flying over the Atlantic in a paper towel tube with a propane tank attached. My latest literary *clandestin de l'amour* is Bernard-Henri Lévy, founder of the New Philosophy Movement and leading intellectual of the contemporary Parisian Left. I believe you would like him although I must say some of his French critics have referred to him as a middle-aged Dandy—very well dressed, with lots of family money and two ex-wives.¹⁶² The current wife is an actress, which simultaneously adds to and detracts from his mystique.

Lévy is unabashedly Leftist in an era when most United States liberals run for cover at any sign that they may be called upon to show evidence of either a conscience or a spine. His most recent book, *Left in Dark Times*, seems at first to be merely an elegy for the Left, which Lévy claims is in danger of being forgotten, having been recently vanquished by its own shortcomings. I am delighted by the defiant tone Monsieur Lévy brings to the text as he describes what has happened to a political movement that in other times distinguished itself by a willingness to shoulder the pain of other people's suffering—more than willing, actually, because Lévy contends that Leftists viewed the act of assuming the other's burdens as a moral imperative.¹⁶³ This definition of morality, he goes on to say, is embodied in the life and work of Emmanuel Levinas whose philosophy

¹⁶² Hitchens, Christopher. "Bon mots and bêtes noires," *New York Times*, September 21, 2008.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/9/21/books/review/Hitchens-t.html>.

¹⁶³ Lévi Bernard-Henri.. *Left in dark times: A stand against the new barbaris*,. trans. Benjamin Moser. New York: Random House, 2008, 35.

revolves around the distinction between the moral man (indebted to the world, a hostage to it, obliged to answer for its disorders and injustices, even when he has not caused them) and the immoral man (who claiming to have ‘done nothing,’ simply feels innocent, wanting nothing of this ‘heteronomy,’ this ‘substitution,’ which seems to him a contradiction in terms, absurd, outrageous).¹⁶⁴

Lévy awakens memories of a time when the act of imagining a utopian possibility was more than a descent into self-indulgent nostalgia. He also offers the idea that there is power in “a certain number of ‘great’ events, of ‘historic’ events, as the saying goes, which serve as great, very great, markers of our identity.”¹⁶⁵ It is tantalizing to think of consequential events which form the identity of an individual or a nation—revolutions and riots, moments of calamitous threat that elicit acts of extraordinary courage, coincidental meetings that seem too momentous to be random, and of course, individuals who, through chance or providence, change the course of history.

For France, Lévy contends, there are four events that “so upend the laws of normal history that history, reasserting itself, resists and opposes them.”¹⁶⁶ He begins with Vichy; second is the Algerian War; third is May 68; and fourth is the Dreyfus Affair.¹⁶⁷ The passage is stunning; as I realized that three of Lévy’s four events have formed the foundation of my own research into the history of France.

You introduced me to Jean Moulin, *le héros de la résistance*, in your Letter from Paris dated December 29, 1964.¹⁶⁸ I was greatly moved by your story of Moulin’s life and death as you peeled back the layers of apologist rhetoric that surround the history of the French collaboration with the Nazis. For Vichy was not a survival strategy or a mere return to

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 36

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶⁸ Flanner, Janet. Letter: December 29, 1964, *Paris Journal 1965-1971*, ed. William Shawn New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich. 1971, 7.

traditional French conservatism but rather a nightmare descent into fascism, and as such engendered a profound sense moral outrage among Moulin and his comrades. Moulin was, of course, called upon to pay the final price in a lonely railroad car at the hands of those who had no soul. Émile Zola's *J'Accuse...! Letter to the President of the Republic*,¹⁶⁹ written at a pivotal moment during the Dreyfus Affair, became emblematic of the artist as public intellectual, which in turn formed my curatorial practice and my passion for the activist artist.

And of course, it was May 1968 and its multiple interpretations that brought me on this trip. The books, the images, the films—nothing could satisfactorily explain the acts of resistance which were born in the suburbs of Paris, spread to the Latin Quarter, and then ultimately exploded and paralyzed an entire nation. I knew all the facts, but there was an enormous gap between my knowledge and my understanding. Now Lévy is suggesting that perhaps there is a connection among these events. I am taken with the synchronicity of my discovery of Lévy at the very moment when I am attempting to construct a coherent interpretation of the events of May 68 and to connect that time 40 years ago with my own suggestion that the time is right to create a culture of resistance in public education.

After years of coursework, I am comfortable with researching a complex question within multiple discourses that weave together to generate new opportunities for interpretation. This trip is taking me in a new direction, and I am beginning to believe that the answers I seek will be inscribed within my own consciousness, which seems to be evolving at an exponential rate.

My initial plan upon arrival was so simple—find the route of the student demonstrators and walk the path they walked to be with them and learn from the experience. Now, I think there are other things I must do first.

¹⁶⁹Zola, Émile. "J'accuse," *L'Aurore*, January 13, 1898, trans. Chameleon Translations. <http://chameleon-translations.com/sample-Zola.shtml>.

The sun is rising and the day is about to begin. So glad to know that you are close by.

À la prochaine, Madame

Your (new) friend, Jeanne

5.2.3 Letter 3 – Salon de Refuses and other Delights

Good morning, Dear Madame:

It's my first day in Paris, and I am ready to introduce myself to this magnificent city. Do not worry about me Madame. I am wearing sensible shoes, a fashionable (translated as black—everyone here wears black I'm told) raincoat with a warm lining, and a lovely, but very practical, black bag, large enough to hold my guidebook (hidden so as not to reveal myself as a tourist), a bottle of water, my notebook (in case I have important thoughts to share with you later) and my lovely new camera. (Please forgive my very parenthetical style this morning Madame—perhaps I am more *jet décalé* than I thought—Fear not I'm sure it will pass!)

Madame, I have decided to postpone my May 68 research until later in the week. Perhaps it is Lévi's voice in my ear whispering about the deep connections between Vichy, Dreyfus, and May 68, but I sense that there is something missing in my understanding of the May events. I can't explain it, but I simply am not ready to walk for myself the path taken by the students as they charged through the streets of the Left Bank forty years ago. I feel wonderfully free of the need to begin my research because I have other very important obligations to fulfill while I am in Paris. Are you surprised? It is simply that waiting until middle age to take one's first trip to Paris means that there are many debts to be paid and expectations to be fulfilled before one begins to work. You see, Madame, I have become a Parisian—first play, then work!

My first stop today will be the Musée d'Orsay, here on the Left Bank, where I will finally be able to see one of my favorite paintings, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, “Lunch on the Grass,” by Édouard Manet. Monsieur Manet has played a critical role in my life both because of the work he created and because I see him as a model for how artists resist the oppressive uses of power.

The story of this painting begins with the Salon des Refusés of 1863, the Salon of the Rejected Painters.

During the second half of the 19th century, the Royal Academies of Painting and Sculpture presented an annual Salon, which had evolved to become the most important art exhibition of the year. The Salon served to establish artists' reputations, as well as their fortunes, for it was really a huge marketplace where artists sold their work to an eager public. Thousands of works of art were submitted for review each year, and a jury of politically appointed "experts" determined which paintings, sculptures, and drawings would be accepted into the exhibition. The renowned art historian John Canaday¹⁷⁰ describes the Salon as catering to the tastes of the bourgeoisie, who represented a new and growing market for art. The sensibility of the day called for highly ostentatious, naturalistic paintings that told a story, preferably expressed through allegory or myth, with which the people were already familiar.

It was 1863 and the Salon had reached a peak of popularity. So great was the demand for inclusion that the jury that year rejected more than 4,000 paintings!¹⁷¹ The works that were accepted appeared to cater to the tastes of a mass audience that craved derivative images and techniques. Despite the fact that most artists of that time chose to accommodate the trends of contemporary public taste, another group forged a quite different path. Manet and other young artists were not at all interested in the past.¹⁷² For them, painting was both an intellectual endeavor and an all-consuming passion, causing them to push the boundaries of the possible to discover new ways of manipulating color, form, and light. These artists were invariably excluded from the Salon.

¹⁷⁰ Canaday, John. *Mainstreams of Modern Art*. (New York: Holt, 1959, 225.

¹⁷¹ Gardner, Helen. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages (1946)*, revised by Horst de la Crois, and Richard Tansey. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980, 720.

¹⁷² Canaday, 208.

But in 1863, something changed. Rather than simply accepting the jury's decision, the excluded artists and their supporters held protests to announce their displeasure. Ultimately, they petitioned Emperor Napoleon III, who, as you may recall, Madame, had the unique distinction of being both the first President of the French Republic and its last Monarch. Napoleon was a shrewd politician and while his own taste in art leaned toward the traditional and decorative, he recognized the fundamental principal of political survival—give the people what they want, particularly if it costs you nothing! The solution was to open an Annex in the Palace of Industry adjacent to the regular Salon. This new space, which would be called the *Salon des Refusés*, would house all of the rejected work and would allow the public, in true democratic fashion, to decide for itself if the works of art had any merit.¹⁷³

I often wonder how the members of the Academy responded to the notion of a separate exhibition featuring the very works of art they had rejected. I suspect they viewed it as an expedient yet satisfying solution, whereby they could appease their Emperor/President and at the same time assure that the work of the dissenting artists would be exposed to the public's derision and ridicule. When I think of the jury process and the corrupt and aesthetically bankrupt way these men had of looking at art, I can only recall your letter of April 9, 1970, in which you wrote about the Salon de Refusés as a “revolt against the mossbacks who were devoted to anything that was old hat or politely nude.”¹⁷⁴

Young Edoard Manet was one of the leaders of the Refusés, and that year he had entered *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* for the jury's consideration. I am certain you have seen the painting, which has now been designated as a masterpiece within the canon of French art. The Academy rejected *Le déjeuner*, and it was exhibited with the other Refusés.

¹⁷³ Gardner, 758.

¹⁷⁴ Flanner, 370.

I love to imagine that I am seeing this painting for the first time with the eyes of a 19th century Parisian. It is an immense work [208 cm × 265.5 cm.] wherein Manet offers a dark wooded area surrounding a clearing and a small pool of water in the distance. In the foreground of the clearing, there is a young woman who sits nude in a relaxed pose, her gaze quite unabashedly meeting ours. With her are two young men, fully clothed; one seems to be engaged in intense conversation while the other has turned to also engage the viewer with his direct gaze. Further in the background, another young woman wearing only a chemise is preparing to enter the pool of water.

Of course, many 19th century romantic and neoclassical painters have depicted mythological landscapes where nudes are used as a way to present the idealized harmony of man and nature. But Manet offers no allegory or myth. Instead we see identifiable people in a contemporary setting who reflect the bohemian life in the parks of Paris, what one art historian calls the “promiscuous present.”¹⁷⁵

We are told that the Parisians who visited the Salon de Refusés were outraged at Manet’s willingness to challenge the standards of public taste. A nude woman, devoid of any sign of shame, stares back at us from within the flat surface of the canvas, as she clearly enjoys herself in a public park. This stark depiction of reality, in which the artist brought together the exalted and the mundane, was too much for the public to bear. Such an outcry! I found a passage from one of the scathing critiques published in the newspaper regarding the painting.

A commonplace woman of the demi-monde, as naked as can be, shamelessly lolls between two dandies dressed to the teeth. These latter look like schoolboys on a holiday, penetrating an outrage to play the man....This is a young man’s practical joke, a shameful open sore.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Gardner, 760.

¹⁷⁶ Hamilton, G.H. *Manet and His Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954, 45.

The popular press was filled with such condemnations; and now, Madame, the story becomes even more dramatic. Imagine who should rise up to defend our young Manet—none other than Émile Zola, who was in those years a very popular novelist and critic. It is 1867, and the events of the Dreyfus Affair are 30 years in the future. Yet, the young Zola is compelled to speak out in the face of the vindictive and quite personal criticism of Manet's painting.

Zola writes,

Luncheon on the Grass is the greatest work of Édouard Manet, one in which he realizes the dream of all painters: to place figures of natural grandeur in a landscape.... [The] nude woman has scandalized the public, who see only her in the canvas. My God! What indecency: a woman without the slightest covering between two clothed men! That has never been seen. And this belief is a gross error, for in the Louvre there are more than fifty paintings in which are found mixes of persons clothed and nude. But no one goes to the Louvre to be scandalized.¹⁷⁷

Zola's words are thrilling and writing them to you only adds to my anticipation as I realize that in a few short hours I will actually be standing in front of the painting. My background as an art historian has given me a tool-kit of analytical skills to interpret how the artist seeks to either embrace or reject the quixotic quest to perfectly replicate reality. Manet transcends the real to capture the perceived and thus becomes, in the eyes of many art historians, the first modernist. He offers the painting as a challenge to contemporary conventions, which when confronted by his skilled hand and eye, dissolved into flows of finely crushed sand carried away by the winds of change. Manet emboldens me with his blatant disregard for the rules that govern the creation of art and for his willingness to confront the consequences that might befall his own career in response to the transgression.

Oh Madame, have I just given you a lesson in modern art? You must think me so arrogant, and I do apologize. It is simply that I have sometimes, through accidents of fate, found

¹⁷⁷ Zola, Emile. 1867. "Edouard Manet," in *Modern Art and Modernism*, eds. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison. New York: Westview Press, 1987, 91.

myself in confronting reactionary forces that seek to silence the voice of artists who speak the truth to power. Manet and his cohorts of the Salon de Refusés taught me that courage is sometimes manifested in the actions of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances and who simply could no longer be silent. These lessons have served me well, Madame, so I hope you will forgive my overabundance of enthusiasm as merely the intoxication I feel in my new surroundings. Despite my outward manifestations of middle age, Paris brings out my young and adventurous self and the transformation is making my head spin just a bit.

In any event, I am buoyed by my recollections of Manet and his courage on this lovely fall morning in Paris as I was eagerly planning my first day of exploration of the Left Bank. I will write again when I return.

Au revoir, Madame Genêt.

Jeanne

5.2.4 Letter 4 Lunch at Deux Magots

Dear Genêt:

Well, here I am squeezed into a corner table on the sidewalk outside Les Deux Magots. Please excuse the familiar greeting at the start of this letter. I simply could not call you Madame Flanner while I was sitting here on the Left Bank, having lunch at this very famous café. I hope you will tolerate my impertinence, and I promise to be back to myself tomorrow.

Such an historic place! I know from the old photos that you were here, perhaps at this very table, surrounded by famous writers and artists, spending your days looking out at the Left Bank. Paris was the center of the creative world in the early 20th century, and here am I so many years later, seeking some understanding of the history and soul of this place and its people.

I'm carrying Bernard-Henri Levy with me today and I pull out the book to re-read the section on Vichy, a shame and a paradox, and yet somehow I sense it is part of the Rosetta Stone that will help me to interpret the events of May 1968. When I think of Vichy, I am haunted by the echo of my father's voice telling stories of his time in service during the second world war. Papa maintained that the French were worse than the Nazis, for behind a Frenchman's wit and sophistication, he would say, was the soul of a collaborator.

Banishing such thoughts, I am cheered by the arrival of my Croque Madame, and I joyfully dive into its completely indulgent magnificence. I want to find a way to remind you of the joys of this lovely dish, dear Genêt, without resorting to the simple fact that it's an egg and cheese sandwich. French cafés are heaven to me, despite the fact that my plate has been Frisbee-tossed in the direction of my table by my ridiculously attractive young waiter.

The lovely autumn weather is holding tightly to the Paris landscape leaving the air brisk but not chilling. Place Saint Germain is crowded with shoppers, tourists, and the Parisians themselves, recognizable by the omnipresent scarf wrapped around their necks in the faux casual style embraced by young and old. What is it about the scarf that so dominates the colorful couture on the Left Bank this lovely November day? Then I remembered a passage you wrote in December 1964 on the occasion of the transfer of Resistance fighter Jean Moulin's ashes to their final resting place in the Pantheon. Moulin was a government worker who joined the French Resistance in 1939 and engaged in clandestine warfare against occupying Nazi forces and their collaborators in the Vichy government. You wrote,

Recently, the city witnessed a series of majestic honors offered to the memory and ashes of Jean Moulin, who died young, aged forty-four in the summer of 1943, tortured to death by the Gestapo in the village of Caluire, near Lyon.... In 1940, in his first misadventure with the Germans and their torture, he had unsuccessfully tried to kill himself by cutting his throat, on which the scars remained, making him a doubly marked man to the end; not only was he the chief

of the Conseil National de la Résistance...and thus the single omniscient French Resistant, whom the Germans most persistently sought to capture, but he was the man who always had to keep a scarf wrapped high around his throat to hide his identifying scars.¹⁷⁸

Parisians would no doubt raise a single accusatory eyebrow at my romantic notion that there is any connection between their colorful neck wear and the noble history of resistance embodied in the hero Moulin.

There is much that the French do not acknowledge about the occupation. Perhaps it is an unwillingness to take responsibility, or perhaps it is simply a question of memory and remembrance. The day that Moulin's ashes were transferred to the Pantheon, Andrex Malraux, the Minister of Culture, wondered aloud how many children of 1965 remembered or had ever heard of the Resistance and its heroes. He tells the story of the women of Corrèze, a small village in central France during the occupation:

The Germans had killed members of a maquis (rural bands of guerilla soldiers who made up the fighting forces of the Resistance in the French countryside) group, and ordered the mayor to have the bodies buried in secret, at dawn. It is the custom in this region for all the women of the village to attend the funeral of anyone from the village, and for each woman to stand on the tomb of her own family during the ceremony. No one in the village knew these maquis fighters, who were from Alsace. When the bodies reached the cemetery, borne by the local villagers under the menacing guard of German machine guns, the night which fell back like the outgoing tide revealed the black-clad forms of the women of Corrèze, from top to bottom of the mountainside, motionless and silent, each standing on the tomb of her own family, waiting for the French dead to be buried.¹⁷⁹

Moulin was not alone in his resistance. He was part of the secret soul of France, whose dissent was hidden—people of the shadows, Malraux called them. Despite being

¹⁷⁸ Flanner, 7.

¹⁷⁹ Malraux, André. Speech on the Occasion of the transfer of Moulin's ashes to the *Panthéon*, 1964.
<http://www.geocities.com/resistancehistory/malraux.html>.

brutally tortured, Moulin revealed nothing about those who fought at his side during the Resistance. As Malraux pointed out, “On that date, his was the face of France.”¹⁸⁰

I’m off, dear Genêt. You are such lovely company, but I’m afraid I have something very important to do and I must go.

Much love,

Jeanne

5.2.5 Letter 5 – Positively French

Madame,

I hope you will forgive me for ending my last letter so abruptly. Please don’t think I am a silly American tourist, but after I wrote the last sentence, I gathered myself up, paid the bill and charged off on a mission. Only a few blocks from Deux Magots is a lovely little boutique and for 17 euros, I bought myself a woven silk scarf in a color that we used to call Alice Walker purple. With the help of the clerk, who as luck would have it spoke not a word of English but was sweet and kind and understood my clumsy attempts to communicate, I wrapped my new scarf ever so casually around my neck.

The fabric was warm and comforting, and as I looked into the mirror, for a moment at least, I felt positively...French!

Au revoir, Genêt.

Votre ami,

Jeanne

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

5.2.6 Letter 6 – Gallic Malapropism

Madame:

It is late in the evening and such a day it has been! I am gloriously tired, but I had to write and tell you a very funny story. You must promise never to mention it to anyone, and we will never refer to it between ourselves, *d'accord?*

This morning, as I prepared to leave the hotel, filled with thoughts of Manet and artistic revolt, I decided to have a light breakfast at the historic Café Flore, on the Boulevard San Germain. My French is very weak, but I am armed with my secret weapon, a phrase I learned to help me navigate around the city with my meager language skills. When I am unsure of myself and need the assistance of a kind Parisian, I simply say, “Pardon, Madame (ou Monsieur), Je suis désolé. Je ne parle pas français. Mai je parle anglais?”

I had been practicing this phrase for days, and I was superbly confident that I could say how sorry I was that I didn’t speak any French and then politely ask permission to speak English. I even invented mnemonic devices to assure that my pronunciation would not be insulting (for the French, I am told, pronunciation is everything.) I would remember désolé meaning I’m sorry, for example, because it sounds like déjeuner, meaning lunch, a word in the title of Manet’s masterpiece that I was about to see for the first time!

Soon after I finished my letter to you, I went downstairs and approached the front desk to ask for directions to the café.

“Bonjour.” I say to the young woman who is sitting behind the desk, working at her computer.

“Bonjour, Madame.” she responds, without looking up from her work.

“ *Je suis déjeuner, Mademoiselle. Je ne parle pas français. Mai je parle anglais?*”

The woman looks up at me with an expression that somehow combines amusement with annoyance.

“Is Madame hungry?” she asks in English, her tone giving new meaning to the cliché, a voice dripping contempt. The two other clerks sitting at their stations behind the desk are highly amused by something I’ve said. At this point, I am so mortified that I begin to wonder how quickly I could find a room in another hotel. As I plan my escape, I hear a voice behind me speaking in a sympathetic tone.

“Bonjour, Madame. I am Jervís, the hotel concierge. May I help you find something?”

I turn and see a tall, strikingly beautiful young man, dressed in a dark suit, lavender shirt, and grey tie. The suit is perfectly tailored to call attention to his wide shoulders and slim hips. His gaze is friendly and welcoming, and Madame, as we would say in America, he is absolutely fabulous. He rebukes the clerk with a glance as he gently takes my arm and guides me away from the front desk. “What exactly did I say?” I ask. By this time, I genuinely feared the worst, envisioning an international incident caused by some completely innocent Gallic malapropism.

“I believe you meant to apologize that you do not speak French and you said instead, ‘I am lunch, and I do not speak French,’ which I’m afraid offered those silly girls an amusing example of a self-evident statement,” Jervís replied with one perfectly shaped eyebrow arched in mock horror.

Of course, his perfect impersonation of the young clerk made me smile and suddenly the absurdity of the incident transformed my embarrassment into amusement. We laughed together, as Jervís gave me directions to the Café Flore and offered to recommend some lovely restaurants for my evenings in Paris. He told me to continue to use my phrase as an introduction, without the allusion to the mid-day meal of course, and people would be glad to help. Off I went to the

Musée d'Orsay and spent the entire day in a state of perfect bliss surrounded by paintings that for years have been my dearest friends and companions.

And so, my dear Madame, my day in Paris brought me laughter and friendship. Tonight I shall dream of walking arm in arm with Manet and Zola to the Palace of Industry to join the Refusés and to see the painting displayed in all of its magnificence and rebellion.

Bonne nuit, Madame and may your dreams tonight be as sweet as mine.

Jeanne

5.2.7 Letter 7 – Kaddish

Dear Madame Flanner:

I have been having such a lovely time. I've been to the Louvre, to the Centre Pompidou, and walked for hours on the *Champs Élysées*. Today is a beautiful sunny morning in Paris, and today I am going to visit the *Panthéon*. My guidebook, which I still keep discretely hidden in my somewhat tacky tourist bag, tells me that the Panthéon was originally built in 1789 as a church dedicated to St. Genevieve. Today, it is the burial place to the greatest heroes of the French nation and that such an honor is reserved for those identified by a parliamentary act for "National Heroes." The list of those so honored includes Voltaire, Rousseau, Dumas, Malraux, Victor Hugo, and other greats of literature and politics.

With its magnificent portico of Corinthian columns and striking frescos within, the building is an exquisite example of Neoclassicism, the façade echoing its namesake in Rome. The architecture of Paris, which normally releases the air from my lungs in great bursts of awe, goes mostly unnoticed today. For I am not here to admire the bricks and mortar of this place but to visit one of its residents, whose mortal voice is silenced by death but whose words have led

me to explore the limitations of my own definitions of courage and resistance. I've come to see Zola.

Émile Zola, a distinguished scholar and popular novelist in France at the end of the 19th century, played a pivotal role in what became known as the Dreyfus Affair, the events surrounding the court-martial, conviction, and incarceration in 1894 of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army who was falsely accused of treason.¹⁸¹ In a letter published on January 13, 1898, Zola excoriates the French government for its participation in the injustice perpetrated on Captain Dreyfus, whose only crime was to be a Jew in a government and a nation where anti-Semitism was a seething wound in the social body.

Oh my dear Madame, I so vividly remember the first time I encountered Zola's *J'accuse* letter. It was late spring in 1970, and I was working two jobs during the day and taking evening classes at the University of Pittsburgh. In those times, we believed the line "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" was a Dickensian prophesy written specifically for us. Late into the night, students would gather in Skibo Hall at Carnegie Tech and listen to itinerant student activists who drove from city to city carrying the stories of anti-war activities in the U.S. and in Europe. Of course, someone always had a guitar, and the evenings would end by singing Dylan, Seeger, Odetta, and the Weavers with a Paul and Arthur chaser.

But on one particularly warm spring evening, there was no singing, only despair and frustration. The war in Viet Nam was spreading to Cambodia; and months before, Seymour Hersh lifted the veil of secrecy and deceit to reveal the atrocities of My Lai. Then on May 4, we watched in horror as the slaughter of innocents unfolded at Kent State. There seemed to be no hope of influencing the course of events perpetrated by our own government.

¹⁸¹ Kleeblatt, Norman. ed., *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth and Justice*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press 1987, 221.

As people milled around the room, a frail looking young man stood up and asked for quiet. He opened his notebook and began to read: “A Letter to the President of the Republic” published in the newspaper *Aurore* on January 13, 1898. We were transfixed by the words, “Would you allow me...” with which the text began. Most of us did not know the name Dreyfus nor of the “Affair” that brought shame upon the Gallic soul, but as our reader spoke Zola’s words, I felt a profound shift in our ability to imagine the possible:

But what filth this wretched Dreyfus affair has cast on your name.... And now the image of France is sullied by this filth, and history shall record that it was under your presidency that this crime against society was committed.... So shall I dare to tell the truth, for I have pledged to tell the full and complete truth if the normal channels of justice failed to do so. My duty is to speak out; I do not wish to be complicit.... I have but one passion: to enlighten those who have been kept in the dark, in the name of humanity which has suffered so much and is entitled to happiness. My fiery protest is simply the cry of my very soul. Let them dare, then, to bring me before a court of law and let the enquiry take place in broad daylight! I am waiting.¹⁸²

The letter ends with Zola’s powerful accusations, each beginning with “J’accuse!” and each naming a perpetrator of the shame.

The reader finished the long letter and looked at us, waiting.

“J’accuse Lyndon Johnson for waging war upon the people of Viet Nam!” rose from among the crowd. “J’accuse the Congress of the United States for refusing to stop the war! J’accuse the Congress of the United States for refusing to stop the war! J’accuse McNamara for his lies and secrecy! J’accuse Rockwell for filling its coffers with blood money earned by selling the machinery of war!

And on and on it went, until almost everyone had spoken. Finally, one young girl who had been quiet in the back of the room rose and spoke.

“J’accuse myself for standing by in silence while atrocities were carried out in my name.”

¹⁸² Zola.

A small smooth Massachusetts beach stone in my pocket has traveled with me since I took it from the glass bowl on my bookshelf in Pittsburgh. I made the decision months ago that if I made it to Paris, I would pay respects in a traditional Jewish fashion at the tomb of Émile Zola. When Jews visit the graves of those upon whose shoulders we stand, it is customary to leave behind a small stone at the gravesite as a shiboleth that makes our presence known to those who have come before and those who will follow. Kaddish, the mourner's prayer, is recited to praise God's glory in times of deepest sorrow. The small stone I leave behind is for Zola, a consecration in grateful memory of his willingness to sacrifice all in the name of resistance.

The echo of my whispered Kaddish seems to reverberate in the stone halls of the Pantheon, as I speak the final lines of the prayer: "He who makes peace in His Heights, may He make peace upon us and let us say Amen."¹⁸³

Au revoir, Madame.

Jeanne

5.2.8 Letter 8 – Le Dîner

Madame Flanner

Life in Paris is beyond glorious!!! I cannot be too extravagant in my praise of this magnificent city and its people nor can I explain how young and free I feel just being here!!!

Such an exclamatory style I've developed!!!! Do you think it's a bit too much? Well, let me tell you my story. I'm sure you will understand, for it is whispered that you also, from time to time my Dear Gênet, found yourself intoxicated by Paris and its many entertainments. I

¹⁸³ Wieseltier, Leon. *Kaddish*. New York: Knopf, 1998, 9.

know you are thinking that I am a very impertinent correspondent—ah well, it must be Paris, for I can assure you that I am exceedingly well mannered at home, *n'est pas*? You have been a wonderful, if somewhat silent, companion, so please forgive me, but I cannot contain my happiness.

So, where was I? Oh yes, my story.

It was 6:30 in the evening and far too early for a civilized French dinner, but I suddenly realized that I was starving. My plan was to explore the Odeon District here on the Left Bank and then hope to find a menu with an English translation. My introductory “Je suis vegetarian” is greeted with the uniquely French response that transcends language—a blank stare followed by an expression that loosely translated means, “You must be joking?”

Exploring the neighborhood, I find Relais Saint Germain, a very famous hotel a few blocks east of Carrefour L’Odeon. On the first floor, I discover Le Comptoir, an elegant restaurant that is always filled with the most beautiful people in Paris. As I stroll by and peek in the window, the diners seem oblivious to my voyeurism, or perhaps they take it as the natural course of things in their very French lives. When I return to the hotel, I am greeted by Jervis, my sweet concierge. Have I told you that Jervis has decided to make me his project during my stay in Paris? He recommends lovely bistros, sends café crème each morning to my room and, together with his boyfriend Claude, serves as my guide as I become acquainted with my lovely Paris. This evening, in response to my casual inquiry about Le Comptoir, Jervis tells me that the chef, Yves Camdeborde, is the current darling of French society and his restaurant is very much in demand. Reservations must be made six months in advance, and the cost? Well my dear Genet, if one has to ask, one likely cannot afford it!

Jervis suggests, “Perhaps Madame might let me help her find a place for dinner that would be much more to Madame’s liking.” Later that evening Jervis, Claude and I become conspirators as Claude tells me that the story of the night Chef Cambedorde looked around at the diners in his restaurant and realized that he was creating his culinary masterpieces for a room filled with *le crème de la bourgeois*. Moreover, he recognized that no one who lived in the neighborhood could possibly afford to come and eat his magnificent cuisine. Cambedorde was saddened by the turn of events; and at that point Jervis interrupts to explain that Paris’ most famous chef grew up in a small village in the north where he learned the secrets of French cuisine from people quite unlike those who now filled his establishment. Chef was determined to find a remedy and a few weeks later, he quietly opened a tiny *epicerie* in l’Odeon not far from Le Comptoir. Every day, he personally delivers inexpensive but superb food in the French country tradition. There are no tables or chairs. You just walk in, choose among the delicacies, and they wrap it up for you to take home and enjoy. It’s well hidden in a tiny street off Boulevard Saint Germain, and *mon amis* and I go off together to have an evening of true French cuisine. Ah, such a feast we had! Crusty bread with cheeses, marinated vegetables, spinach and broccoli tortes for me and cassoulet for the boys, and chocolate crepes for dessert.

I bought dinner and Jervis and Claude bought the wine and we ate with great gusto in a small room adjacent to the lobby of the hotel. Did I mention that I also drank far too much Bordeaux—an absolute necessity with such beautifully prepared food.

I suspect that by now you have noticed that I am more than a bit tipsy. Please do not think badly of me, Madame, but tonight I have thrown off the burden of discipline and indulged in a healthy dose of *la joie de vivre*—it is thrilling. Tomorrow, I am ready to take my journey

through the streets of the Latin Quarter to find the stories of May 68. I invite you to join me on my adventure, and so until tomorrow...

Bon soir, my friend, *bon soir*.

5.2.9 Letter 9 - A Letter of a Different Sort

Dear Miss Flanner:

It is deep in the night and the battle between my exhausted body and my heightened consciousness rages on. I am hounded by old demons, ghosts of childhood fears and unachievable expectations that surface from the darkness and make their presence felt even here in this luminous city. Why did I think I would find the voices of students and workers who imagined and then manifested the creative chaos of revolution that was May 68? I am merely an ordinary woman trying to trace the steps of extraordinary people, a nightmare voyeur who is scarred by terror blindness, living in a prison of caustic delusions. Paris may mean freedom for others, but for me the prize will remain always just out of reach.

“It’s not going to come to you, Dear. You are going to have to go out and find it.” The voice was so perfectly articulated and distinct that I sat up in bed quite startled, for I had thought only a moment ago that I was alone. Then in a manner that seemed completely outside my own volition, I find myself fully dressed and walking out of the hotel door; I turn to the left and walk up the long winding street. At the very top of the hill stands my destination, the Théâtre de l’Odéon.

I’m running now, almost dancing my way up to the crest of the old Parisian street, and despite the speed with which my body seems to moving through time and space, I see the neighborhood around me in a vision of startling clarity. Every structure, every window, every

street sign, every paving stone emerges as a vessel of memory filled with potential and offering stories of what has unfolded in these historic streets. New eyes reveal that until this moment I have been wandering around the Left Bank shrouded in a veil of uncertainty, embodying my unwillingness to traverse the last boundaries between myself and those I had come here to study.

The voices grow louder, coming from inside the Odeon Theater, the site of the student occupation in May 1968. I see the neoclassical façade and the historic carved doorway. I am not surprised that the doors are open, and I enter the brightly lit lobby. There is an air of celebration as I move through the cavernous space. I am soon surrounded by people, milling about undeterred by multiple long wooden tables casually scattered throughout the room. Each table is covered with mountains of manifestos, leaflets, and posters, a feast for the mind. Everyone is talking in small groups, animated by a passion I almost couldn't recognize—the freedom of enhanced possibility. The redhead is here, of course, and I recognize others of the student movement who are mingling with actors and artists, workers from the Renault factory, writers, philosophers and members of the faculty from the Sorbonne.

Suddenly as if startled by some silent clarion, everyone stops talking and turns toward the theater doors. I am carried along with one of the streams of people and enter the theater, where I take my seat in the back. I turn my attention to the stage where I see, downstage right, a re-creation of the 1968 photograph of where you, my dearest Madame, are sitting at the Deux Magots Café. I am so filled with joy and anticipation that I can barely breathe: Tonight is the night when I will meet you at last...

5.2.10 Letter 10 – Someone in a Tree

Downstage right, the set is a re-creation of the 1968 photograph of Janet Flanner sitting at the Deux Magot Café. There is one French café table with two chairs. Back-lit projections recreate the Paris streetscape captured in the photograph. The remainder of the stage is bare except for a scrim along the upstage wall, and several chairs in a row aligned with the front of the stage. Upstage right, is a tree exquisitely rendered in two dimensions. The object must be constructed to allow an actor to sit in the tree comfortably and sing. Periodically, as the characters tell their stories, images appear on the backlit scrim.

The Characters

Janet Flanner/The Narrator, who is as she appears in the photograph and who should wear conservative period clothing of the late 1960s, a bouffant hair style, white gloves, and have a somewhat acerbic attitude and tone. (Think Elaine Stritch)

The Professor, who had been a student in 1968 at the Sorbonne.

The Art Historian

The Worker

The Student

The Reporter, who captured the events.

Someone in a Tree, who sings the Sondheim song very, very well.

As the play begins, Janet is sitting at the table, but rather than reading the newspaper as she does in the photograph, she is reading a letter. An off-stage voice speaks.

My Dearest Friend,

Morning arrived today to reveal heavy grey clouds hanging over the Latin Quarter like a veil of mourning, a perfect reflection of my mood. Oh, please do not misunderstand, this week

has been a magical time, filled with art, history, food, and friendship—a true Parisian experience. I could return to America at this very moment and be perfectly contented that I have lived my dream of visiting the most beautiful city in the world.

Yet...there is something left undone. I came to Paris to find the stories of *May 68*, and to capture the events that unfolded in those days of resistance. For months before the trip, I devoured books and journals like a starving woman; but with each turn of the page, I was more unsatisfied and empty. The ideas were clear, but the meaning that is made when text meets consciousness was hidden by a particularly virulent form of silence, shrouding these events and kept them from my gaze. And so I came to Paris, with you as my guide and companion, to see the city for myself and to search for something clearly present but as yet undefined.

After these many days of walking through the Rive Gauche de Paris, I feel no closer to finding those stories than I was at the moment when I stepped off the wretched plane. Even now, sitting at our favorite table at Deux Magots sipping café crème just after dawn, I faintly hear the voices of the resistance in the distance. I struggle to stand with the ghosts of those who resisted and implore them to conjure their memories so that I can tell their stories. Laurel Richardson¹⁸⁴ invites me to connect aesthetically, politically, and emotionally with those about whom I write; and I know that accepting that invitation requires that I embrace the potential for a personal transformation from observer to participant. Ah Madame, as you know by now, the intellect was willing, but the spirit could not find the way.

Then an idea breaks through the silence; and I recall that so often in the past when I find myself in times of trouble Brother Sondheim speaks to me. It happened again this morning, and he reminded me that he too once pondered the question of how to be and to see and to tell within

¹⁸⁴ Richardson, Laurel. *Fields of Play*. Walnut Creek, CA : AltaMira Press, 1997, 129.

the context of a particular place and time that was not your own. He found a way to be both within and without, to borrow, and then to share a powerful story that belongs to others who are generous in the telling but wary of the stranger. I imagine Schrödinger's kitten curled up in my lap as I listen to Sondheim's voice describing his resolution of the paradox (while creating one or two new ones) through what he describes as his favorite piece. The answer is revealed in the words of the song, "Someone in a Tree."

Someone in a tree appears and begins to sing. While she is singing, the characters take their places on the chairs, including Janet who moves to the farthest seat stage right and assumes the role of narrator. As Someone is singing, all of those seated turn to look at her. She sings at other times in the play, but this is the last time the speakers take note of her presence.

Someone in a Tree

Pardon me, I was there

In a tree near the Boulevard

There was a tree ...

Narrator/Janet (spoken) Which was where?

Someone in a Tree

Very near...

Maybe over there,

But there were trees then, everywhere...

And I was there...

I was younger then ...

I was good at climbing trees ...

I was younger then ...

I saw everything! ...

I was hidden all the time ...

It was easier to climb ...

I was younger then ...

I saw everything! ...

Where they came and where they went —

I was part of the event.

I was someone in a tree

If it happened I was there

I saw everything...I was someone in a tree.¹⁸⁵

*Narrator/Janet*¹⁸⁶

They called it the fever and euphoria of revolution.¹⁸⁷ I wrote at the time that the Viet Nam war was raging, and throughout the world, students were engaged in protests against the United States and its policies in Southeast Asia. One of the dissidents, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, understood that there was a connection between students' dissatisfaction with their university and its policies and the imperialist war in Viet Nam. Late in 1968, in describing the events leading to May, Cohn-Bendit wrote, "As opposition to the Vietnam War assumed international proportions, French students...were increasingly involved in campus demonstrations, the more so as their hatred of this war went hand in hand with the dawning realization that their own universities were nothing more than cogs in the capitalist machine."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Sondheim, Stephen. *Someone in a Tree. Pacific Overtures* New York: Theater Communications Group.1986. *Pacific Overtures* is Sondheim's tale of the emergence of Japan from an isolated island nation to a national power.

¹⁸⁶ A footnote indicates that I am using a direct quote from the individual who is speaking either his or her own words or the words of the author whose work is cited.

¹⁸⁷ Singer, Daniel *Prelude to Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: South End Press. 118, 2002.

¹⁸⁸ Cohn-Bendit, Daniel. *Obsolete communism: The Left-wing Alternative*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 2000), 24.

On March 22, 1968, eight students broke into the office of the Dean of the Nanterre Campus of the University of Paris as a way to protest the recent arrest of members of the National Vietnam Committee. These individuals, who were led by Cohn-Bendit and who became known as the Nanterre Eight, galvanized the support of the students throughout France. The conflicts at Nanterre continued for weeks with multiple confrontations and arrests, until May 2, when the administration closed the campus. Students from Nanterre traveled to Paris, particularly to the Sorbonne, where they sought support from fellow students and from sympathetic faculty. Many stories unfolded in Paris in the month of May 1968. It was spring, of course and Paris was in bloom.

Someone in a Tree

I was part of the event.

I was someone in a tree

If it happened I was there

I saw everything.

I was someone in a tree.¹⁸⁹

Narrator/Janet

The students from Nanterre had arrived in Paris the day before, but the revolt began on the afternoon of Friday, May 3rd, in the Sorbonne itself, when Rector Jean Roche, who is its head, in an unpardonable academic error, called in the Paris Police—an act that violated the sanctuary of the university, maintained over centuries.¹⁹⁰

The Student

¹⁸⁹ Sondheim.

¹⁹⁰ Flanner, 250.

There was no special trouble in the courtyard. The strongest allegations against us were that we broke an old table in order to arm ourselves with its legs...The Rector was trying to teach us a lesson—he would isolate the troublemakers and crush us once and for all...He thought he could expel a few students and intimidate us with arrests to prove that no nonsense would be tolerated.¹⁹¹

Professor

A few students gathered in the front square of the Sorbonne. The students were from Nanterre and they were joined by activists from the Sorbonne College itself. The Nanterre Eight were about to face charges on the following Monday. By 4 p.m., the Sorbonne was surrounded by the Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS), the riot control forces of the National Police. Students were being arrested on the basis that they were spotted wearing motorcycle helmets. News spread rapidly and students came from all over the city. Fighting began as a way to free those who had already been arrested. Such was this battle between students and police that the college closed. This was only the second time in 700 years that the Sorbonne was forced to close, the other time being in 1940 when the Nazis took Paris.¹⁹²

Narrator/Janet

By Saturday night, the Sorbonne students, arms linked for strength, were streaming up and down the Latin Quarter sidewalks and streets.¹⁹³

Student

We chanted “CRS-SS,” provocatively conflating the French police with the Nazis.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Singer, 119-120.

¹⁹² Capdevielle, Jacques. Interview,” in *City Guides: Paris May 1968 Walking Tour*. Poirier: Agnes, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/audio/2008/apr/15/city.guides.paris.1968>,

¹⁹³ Flanner, 251.

¹⁹⁴ Bourg, Julian. *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and contemporary French Thought*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007, 21.

Narrator/Flanner

By Sunday morning...several of the courtyard students had been sentenced to two years in prison, without appeal, at which news the Sorbonne as a whole rose in a sentiment of fury, and the week of riots began, agitating all of Paris and taking over power from the city's adults and from the nation's government, in a way. Violence became the pattern. Street fighting animated the Rue Soufflot, broke out around the Panthéon and the Place Edmond-Rostand, at the corner of the Luxembourg Gardens, and in all the smaller medieval alleyways leading off the lower Boulevard Saint-Michele.¹⁹⁵

Student

The news spread fast. From libraries, from cafes, from all over the place, students started moving toward the Sorbonne...And here the unexpected happened. The students did not write an indignant letter to *Le Monde*. They did not circulate a petition. Nor did they call a protest meeting for the morrow at the Mutualité, where distinguished Nobel Prize winners could recall the Rights of Man and the Citizen, while others could warn the government to beware. We did nothing of the sort. We simply thronged toward the police chanting "*Libérez nos camarades—Free our Comrade*" the slogan that was to be the refrain of one memorable week.¹⁹⁶

Professor

On Monday May 6, the Nanterre Eight passed through a police cordon on their way to appear before the University Discipline Committee. The students decided to march through Paris; and on their return to the Latin Quarter, they were savagely attacked by the police on the Rue St. Jacques. The students tore up paving stones and overturned cars to form barricades. Police pumped tear gas into the air and called for reinforcements. The Boulevard Saint Germain

¹⁹⁵ Flanner, 251.

¹⁹⁶ Singer, 121. The Mutualité is a conference center in the 5th arrondissement of Paris, where people often gather in rented space to hold conversations and meetings.

became a bloody battleground with the official figures at the end of the day reading, 422 arrests and 345 police injured. This day was to go into the annals of 68 as “bloody Monday.”¹⁹⁷

Student

The next day there were twice as many demonstrators, and not just students. Thousands of young workers, school pupils, teachers, and lecturers were there, too. To prevent further clashes, the organizers took the march across the Seine and up the Champs-Élysées to sing the *Internationale* under the Arc de Triomphe.

Narrator/Janet

Yes, I remember Wednesday night. As if their energy were uncontrollable, the students embarked by the thousands on a long parading march up and down Paris, mounting the Champs-Élysées to the Arc de Triomphe, where they extinguished the flames over the Unknown Soldier’s Tomb, had a sit-in around it, and sang.¹⁹⁸

The student, the worker, and the professor stand and sing. The art historian looks around uncomfortably. Janet and the reporter are expressionless and somewhat unmoved.

Arise ye workers from your slumbers

Arise ye prisoners of want

For reason in revolt now thunders

And at last ends the age of can’t.

Away with all your superstitions

Servile masses arise, arise

We’ll change henceforth the old tradition

And spurn the dust to win the prize.

¹⁹⁷ Capdevielle.

¹⁹⁸ Flanner, 251.

So comrades, come rally
And the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human race.
So comrades, come rally
And the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human race.

Narrator/Janet

Because the barricades are a historic instinctive accompaniment of French rebellions, early Thursday evening, with their indomitable anger and energy, the students had started building barricades throughout the Latin Quarter. They dug up the cube-shaped paving blocks from the streets, piled them as ammunition and protection to a height of five or six feet, and in the Rue Gay-Lussac, just off the Luxembourg Gardens, added all the cars that had been parked there.¹⁹⁹

Student

On the Friday evening, another huge crowd congregated on the Left Bank. Once again they tried to march across the river, but this time every bridge was blocked by CRS, and the crowd found itself hemmed into the Latin Quarter. Spontaneously barricades were thrown up and down the Boulevard St Michel and the other streets around the Sorbonne. Just after midnight, a delegation was sent into the Sorbonne with their demands to withdraw the police from the Quarter, reopening the Sorbonne, and releasing the prisoners. As the crowds waited, residents in the mainly middle class and prosperous flats along the Boulevard brought down food and drink for the crowd, showing just how far public opinion had traveled over the last few days.²⁰⁰

Professor

¹⁹⁹Flanner, 251.

²⁰⁰ Flanner, 252.

They shouted, “*Sous le pavés, la plage.*” It’s based upon the Situationist quote, “Under the stones is the beach.” Pick up the paving stones and find utopian beaches underneath. Tear down the relics of modernity. Pick up a pavé, one of the cobblestones in the Paris streets, hurl it at the policeman, hurl it and this is how you find the plage, the utopia, the perfect world.²⁰¹

Art Historian

The Great French poet, Isidore Ducasse, the Comte de Lautréamont who was so important to the Surrealists, said poetry should be made by everybody, not just by poets. This idea that everybody was creatively liberated, that everybody could make a work of art or graffiti, was very important. This idea was that beneath every paving stone there were the sands and the sea of the imagination. So slogans like *Sous les pavés, la plage!* Beneath the paving stones - the beach! Everything was there, waiting to explode to turn ordinary citizens into creators. Suddenly this hierarchical thing that existed between not just teachers and students but parents and children and even husbands and wives suddenly exploded.²⁰²

Someone in a Tree

And there's someone in a tree —

Or the day is incomplete.

Without someone in a tree,

Nothing happened here.

I am hiding in a tree.

I'm a fragment of the day.

If I weren't, who's to say

²⁰¹ Hussey, Andrew. Interview. in *City Guides: Paris May 1968 Walking Tour*. Poirier: Agnes, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/audio/2008/apr/15/city.guides.paris.1968>.

²⁰² Wilson, Sarah. Interview. in *City Guides: Paris May 1968 Walking Tour* (Poirier: Agnes, 2008). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/audio/2008/apr/15/city.guides.paris.1968>.

Things would happen here the way

That they happened here?

I was there.

Someone in a tree.²⁰³

Professor

On Friday May 10, 30,000 students, including high school students, had gathered around the Place Defret-Rocherchau. They marched toward the Sorbonne along the Boulevard St. Germain. All roads leading off the boulevard were blocked by police armed for conflict. Fifty barricades were erected by the demonstrators in preparation for an attack by the police.²⁰⁴

The Reporter

By 100 a.m. literally thousands help build barricades...women, workers, bystanders, people in pajamas, human chains to carry rocks, wood, iron...Our barricade is double one three-foot-high row of cobble stones, an empty space of twenty yards, then a nine-foot-high pile of wood, cars, metal posts, dustbins. Our weapons are stones, metal, etcetera, found in the street.²⁰⁵

Narrator/Janet

“*Nous sommes chez nous*. We are at home,” the students kept saying.

The students, who were like young Davids, were armed, if at all, with only lids of garbage pails, while the mature, burley C.R.S. men facing them were equipped with enormous shields of medieval size and were wearing modern anti-tear-gas goggles. As the police closed in, the students began running up to apartment doors to beg for shelter. Their first protection was to scrub their hands, for if the police came prowling up and found a boy with tar on his dirty fingers, it was proof that he had been using paving blocks as ammunition or in a barricade, and

²⁰³ Sondheim.

²⁰⁴ Capdevielle.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

he was hauled off to the police vans below. Red Cross stations had been set upon the *Boul' Mich'*, and after midnight women taxi drivers banded together to take out the wounded students, who mostly had bashed heads. The students fought with unflagging courage until they were knocked down and out by the police...Had the young French soldiers fought like rioters against the Germans in June, 1940, Paris might not have fallen.²⁰⁶

Reporter

As the barricades multiply almost everywhere, though within a limited perimeter, the security forces receive reinforcements from units that had until then been positioned outside the Latin Quarter and close down the area, which with each passing minute takes on an insurrectional air. This first operation by the forces of order creates a certain disquiet among many students, who begin to retreat. Others, on the contrary, build more barricades, which sprout up in even greater number and which will finally give the image of a fortified camp. Sixty barricades will be put up in this way and be continually fortified. Many of them are higher than two meters tall. A veritable frenzy takes hold of the demonstrators in their hunt for materials that can reinforce the barricades they are building cars, wood beams, rolls of wire, breeze blocks, scaffolding. Construction sites are pillaged. Helmets and work vests are taken and bulldozers are started up. Soon anthills are piling up, built of all that can be dragged along.²⁰⁷

Reporter

1215 a.m. There is hope of seeing everything end peaceably when it is learned that Cohn-Bendit, as well as several other students and professors, are received by the Rector, Jean Roch, who, it is said, has been in telephone contact with M. Alain Peyrefitte, the Minister of National Education. But he does nothing but offer the previous proposals re-opening of the Sorbonne in the morning,

²⁰⁶ Flanner, 251.

²⁰⁷ *LeMonde*, May 11-12, 1968.

and “examining with benevolence” the cases of the arrested students. While Daniel Cohn-Bendit and those who accompanied him were still in the Rector’s office, on the streets people were preparing to pass the night. Those living along the river tossed food to them from their windows; they were brought drinks. Despite depredations of all kinds, and especially the smashing and flipping over of cars, a visible sympathy seems to have taken hold between the uncompromising ones at the barricades and their spectators. In their ranks, the presence of older men who don’t hesitate to give advice assist in the construction of barricades. For them, as for a certain number of young workers, it’s a matter of demonstrating against “the bourgeois order.”²⁰⁸

Student

145 a.m. Cohn-Bendit leaves the rectorate and declares, “We didn’t engage in negotiations. We said to the Rector, “What’s happening this evening in the streets is that an entire youth is expressing itself against a certain society. We said to him that in order for there not to be any spilling of blood it is necessary that the police leave the Latin Quarter, and that as long as our three demands aren’t met we know that the demonstrators will remain behind their barricades.”²⁰⁹

Reporter

240 a.m. A first barricade falls on the Boulevard St Michel. In order to delay the slow but already ineluctable advance of the forces of order, the students ignite their barricades with gas and set fire to tourist buses that they push into the middle of the street. In the face of the demonstrators’ determination, the police will soon use offensive grenades. There are many wounded on both sides. Because of the barricades, the combat, and the closing off of the area, the evacuation of people touched or indisposed by the gas is extremely difficult. First aid centers

²⁰⁸ *LeMonde*.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*.

are set up in various spots in the zones still untouched, and from which the wounded would later be transported.²¹⁰

Reporter

300 a.m. While for more than an hour the students have been chanting “De Gaulle Assassin,” the police charges are multiplying, and they are removing the barricades one after another after strong resistance. Many people throw water from their windows onto the students to protect them from the effects of the tear gas. From time to time, the police fire grenades into the apartments of these people to force them to retreat, sometimes to higher floors.²¹¹

Student

In the course of the night Monsignor Marty, Archbishop of Paris, had made an appeal over the airwaves of Radio Luxembourg “I appeal for calm. The violence must immediately cease. I ask all those who bear responsibility on both sides to meet again. A just solution must be arrived at quickly. This concerns us all.” This appeal was repeated over the ORTF in the morning.²¹²

Professor

The faculty of the Sorbonne released a statement. “We have communicated with the Ministry of the Interior, and we have said that if the order were given to the police to stop the combat as soon as possible, we would immediately intercede so that the students would also stop, and that if this order is not given to the police as soon as possible we would resign from the French university. We were given no response.”²¹³

Finally, while the radio stations give the addresses of first aid stations, in the name of Nobel Prize winners Professors Alfred Kastler, Nobel Prize for Physics in 1966, and Jacques Monod,

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ *LeMonde*.

Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1965, and a great number of their colleagues of the University of Paris, Professor Francois Michaud of the Faculty of Letters of Nanterre addresses a “final and urgent appeal to the government and to all the authorities so that they bring an immediate halt to the combats, that the police disarm so that the first aid service can pass through to ensure the transport of the many wounded and that the hospitals be ready to receive them.”²¹⁴

Student

A night of riot in the Quarter Latin police assault 60 barricades. Three hundred and sixty-seven are hospitalized of which 251 are police; 720 others are hurt and 468 are arrested. Sixty cars were burned and 188 others were damaged. The Minister of Education says of the protestors, "Ni doctrine, ni foi, ni loi." Neither doctrine, nor faith, nor law.²¹⁵

Someone in a Tree.

I saw everything! ...

Where they came and where they went —

I was part of the event.

I was someone in a tree!

I was there then...

It's the fragment, not the day.

It's the pebble, not the stream.

It's the ripple, not the sea.

Not the building but the beam,

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Not the garden but the stone...

Someone in a tree.²¹⁶

Professor

On Monday, May 13th students were released but the spark had already started the forest fire.

The trade unions called a one-day strike and a march was organized in Paris for the same day.²¹⁷

Worker

It was 615 a.m. and crowds began to gather outside the gates of the giant Renault works at Boulogne Billancourt. The main trade union *centrales* have called a one-day general strike. We are protesting against police violence in the Latin Quarter and in support of long-neglected claims concerning wages, hours, the age of retirement, and trade union rights in the plants. By 645 hundreds of workers are streaming in and hear this message over the loudspeaker "The CRS have recently assaulted peasants at Quimper and workers at Caen, Lyon, and Dassault. Now they are turning on the students. The regime will not tolerate opposition. It will not modernize the county. It will not grant us our basic wage demands. Our one day strike will show the Government and employers our determination. We must compel them to retreat."²¹⁸

Narrator/Janet

Late Monday afternoon, the biggest parade of marchers that Paris had ever seen started moving from the Place de la République toward the Place Denfert-Rochereau and the Lion de Belfort statue, which had become the new student meeting place. The marching crowd was a mixture of university students, of teen-aged *lycée* students who had prematurely joined the academic revolt, of teachers, and of workers who were mostly from the striking C.G.T. (Confédération Générale

²¹⁶ Sondheim.

²¹⁷ Capdevielle.

²¹⁸ "Solidarity: Paris May 1968: An eyewitness account," in *Paris: May 1968. Non a las Bureaucratie Solidarity Pamphlet* (undated). www.struggle.ws/pdf.html.

du Travail) union. The social mixture of workers and intellectuals represented the new fraternization. The parade marched behind a huge banner proclaiming “Solidarity of Teachers, Students, and Workers.”²¹⁹

Worker

On Tuesday, May 14, The workers of Sud Aviation near Nantes occupied their factory. Then Renault plants at Cleon, Flins, Le Mans, and Boulogne Billancourt all went on strike. Young workers at Cleon refused to leave the factory at the end of their shift and locked the manager into his office.²²⁰ Industrial Normandy, Paris, and Lyons closed down virtually *en masse*. Air traffic controllers in Orly and French television (ORTF) voted to join the strike. Coal production stopped and public transport in Paris halted. Two million people were on strike and 122 factories were reported to be occupied. The textile industry and big department stores of Paris joined the snowballing general strike. Teachers unions joined the strike. The undertakers went on strike—“Now is not a good time to die.”²²¹

Student

On that same day, Daniel Cohn-Bendit issued a statement “A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of student revolt. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre the Pope and Central Committee, Kissinger and de Gaulle, French Communists and German police-spies. But now it has become world-wide Berkeley, Berlin, Tokyo, Madrid, Warsaw—the student rebellion is spreading like wildfire, and authorities everywhere are frantically asking themselves what hit them.”²²²

²¹⁹ Flanner, 253.

²²⁰ Sreenan, Dermot. *May 1968*. Dark Star Press and Rebel Press, 1986.
<http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/maya.html?20091>.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Cohn-Bendit, 23.

Narrator/Janet

On May 15, Theatre de l'Odeon is occupied by the students. They form the revolutionary Actions Committee L'Odeon.

Student

The theater was filled with makeshift beds, but with the continual vociferous meeting and consultations going on, I doubted that anyone could sleep. We were tired and dirty, but we were euphoric and intoxicated with the idea of righting every wrong.²²³ We issued our Manifesto.

Student

We are not a movement of an *-ism*. We don't have a label and we don't want one. Our keyword is the word REVOLUTION. That's why we don't have a flag; the red flame that flies above the Odéon has nothing to do with communism. It is a warning sign, just as the black flag is not an anarchist symbol but simply means STOP. This is all because we want to show our presence and our will to act, because we say "Enough" to the present society, to its reformists and to those intrigues that allow it to survive. We don't have a doctrine, but rather a single principle it is SOCIETY WHICH MUST BE AT THE SERVICE OF THE INDIVIDUAL, AND NOT THE OPPOSITE. Consequently, it is man who must make society. Currently it is society that shapes mankind and reduces it to nothing but an instrument of consumption and production in service to capitalism. Reforms, however large in appearance, will change nothing at the heart of the problem; at the very best they would change for a few months or years the exploitation of the individual and the alienation which makes him a perfectly docile tool of big capital. WHAT IS NEEDED IS A RADICAL CHANGE OF THIS SOCIETY'S STRUCTURES, whatever the means needed to succeed in this transformation. We don't have an alternative program or

²²³ Miller, Karen. On the barricades in May 1968. *Swans Commentary*. August 28, 1968. <http://www.swans.com/library/art12/moller02.html>. Retrieved 12/15/08.

platform because we are revolutionaries and not reformists. Our movement has the goal of creating a revolutionary reality we must destroy the current society of paralyzing, alienating, and dehumanizing bourgeois production and consumption. And so we say that THE REVOLUTION WILL BE PERMANENT OR IT WILL NOT BE AT ALL. Protest will be permanent in the same way.²²⁴

Narrator/Janet

On May 19, at the Elysée Palace, President de Gaulle says, "*La réforme, oui; la chienlit, non,*" which means "reform yes, shit no." The students respond with "*La chienlit, c'est lui,*" which means "Shit, that's him" and becomes a slogan of the student movement.²²⁵

A week ago, there were three million workers of various sorts on strike in France. This coming weekend, there will be ten million. The figure cannot go a great deal higher without social danger. Paris is *paralysé*, without the capacity for municipal movement.²²⁶

Someone in a Tree

I can hear them now ...

I hear everything ...

Many times they shout when they speak.

Other times they think.

Or they argue it ...

Since I hear them, they are there,

As they argue it²²⁷

²²⁴ Revolutionary Action Committee l'Odeon, *Reforms no? Revolution: Yes* (1968), The May Events Archive of Simon Fraser University, trans. Mitchell Abidor and Greg Goodlander. <http://www.marx.org/history/france/may-1968/odeon.htm>.

(accessed April 2, 2009)

²²⁵ Institute of Social History.

²²⁶ Flanner, 255.

²²⁷ Sondheim.

Narrator/Janet

On May 24, the rioters arrive in the Latin Quarter equipped with saws and hatchets, enabling them to cut down a reported seventy-two plane trees, some slender and young, some of a certain age and fine size, along the Boulevards Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain down near the Cluny Museum, to make monster street barricades. Of all their destructive riots, this was the only one that left a pair of venerable Paris boulevards looking as if they had been cruelly ravaged by a Kansas cyclone—the only one after which French Army engineers had to carry off the debris with bulldozers and cranes.²²⁸

Professor

From May 13 onward, two things were happening in parallel but having an influence on each other. One is that the government doesn't know what to do. De Gaulle has already gone off to Romania. He does not know what to do. There is a kind of snowball effect emanating from the Sorbonne. Students across France are realizing that what is happening at the Sorbonne is not just a student prank. It's something that has terrified the government—like a moment in a game of chess when you realize that you can bring the whole thing collapsing down on your head. There is a third element, the accumulating fear of the everyday bourgeois middle class Parisian. This is not to be underestimated as things begin to get blocked up, as rubbish does not get emptied, as the metro is not working properly. The structures of everyday life are starting to disintegrate.²²⁹

Student

We occupied the Ecole de Beaux Arts. The art students were actively producing thousands of anti-government posters, many of which already covered the walls of Paris. The art school was

²²⁸ Flanner, 259.

²²⁹ Hussey.

packed with people standing around in groups, comparing notes, discussing the general strike, and planning the evening ahead.²³⁰

Professor

Important artists from all over Paris came to the Beaux-arts to work with students to make the posters. Any artist was like any student. Everybody was equal. They came in the morning about 800 or 900 and had a general discussion to decide what was the topic of the day.

Afterwards, everybody went to the *atelier* (workshop or studio) to make posters. At 500 in the afternoon, they gather in the main hall, they put the posters in a line, and in front of each poster there was one student in favor of the poster and one student against the poster. After there was a vote. If the vote was positive, the poster was printed in serigraphy, a fast and cheap way of making posters, and next morning early it was distributed and put on the walls in the streets of Paris.²³¹

Artist

They ultimately discovered silk screening and it looked like washing lines everywhere with Parisian laundry everywhere with all of these posters. On the other hand, the ideological content of the posters was very important.

Professor

Daniel Cohn-Bendit was prevented from returning to France by the government after a short trip to speak to other revolutionary gatherings in Europe. After heavy protests in the Latin Quarter against the decision, the Gaullist and Communist press made statements about Cohn-Bendit's Jewishness and emphasized that he was a German, a foreigner, and an undesirable. In a significant response, two demonstrations were held in Paris on May 24. The protesters took their

²³⁰ Moller.

²³¹ Capdevielle.

rally cry, “*Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands!*” which means “We are all German Jews!” from the posters made by the action committee at the École des Beaux-Arts. There were two posters that showed Cohn-Bendit’s face, one with the inscription “*Nous sommes tous indésirables*” and the other with “*Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands.*” In their support of Cohn-Bendit, the rebels of 1968 thus identified with German Jews, with undesirables, outsiders, and foreigners reduplicating the language of Vichy legislative exclusion and simultaneously associating the Gaullist government with the Vichy regime.²³²

Narrator/Janet

On Wednesday, the Confederation Generale du Travail, the great French labor union, had arranged for a massive march of more than a hundred thousand of its members from the Bastille to the Gare Saint-Lazare, where no trains had runs since the previous Friday. The night before, the C.G.T had announced on the radio that the march would not be made in the spirit of merely demanding higher wages but would be strictly political. In consequence, the marchers sang the “Internationale,” and their main slogan was “Gouvernement Populaire!,” meaning a popular-front government with Communist participation. De Gaulle’s public statements were “intended to draw the Communist feeling out into the open, where it would be unmasked by its own action, as a weapon sure to alarm the rank and file of the more ordinary non-Communist French...and rally them around their nation’s familiar old leader once again. It was a brilliant gambit...in the spirit of what is now called the psychology of ‘the part of fear’.” Like an old Frenchman playing political chess, with his government and possibly, peace in France at stake, he let the men he considered his enemies fall into their own error of overconfidence, on which they lost.²³³

²³² Judaken, Jonathan. *John Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2008, 220.

²³³ Flanner, 261.

Someone in a Tree

"But we want ..."

"No, you can't

And we won't ..."

"But we need it,

And we want ..."

"Will you grant — ?"

"If you don't ..."

"We concede it ..."²³⁴

Narrator/Janet

Thursday afternoon, May 30. On Thursday afternoon, de Gaulle made an upstanding old rallying-cry speech. It was harsh in its statement that the Communists were seeking an international autocracy.²³⁵

Historian

May 30 was fortuitously the feast of Joan of Arc and de Gaulle's speech was broadcast only on the radio because the Office de Radiodiffusion television de Francais (ORTF) was on strike in support of the movement. Memories of the resistance reverberated throughout deGaulle's address.... The speech was extremely effective, and on the evening of May 30, over 300 pro-order demonstrators filled the Champs-Élysées in support of the regime...along with cries of "de Gaulle n'est seul," which means "de Gaulle is not alone." A few of de Gaulle's supporters were

²³⁴ Sondheim.

²³⁵ Flanner, 263.

heard shouting, “*La France au français*” and hauntingly “*Cohn-Bendit à Dachau*”. The May 30 rally down the Champs-Élysées marked the death knell of the events of May.²³⁶

The Voice of Charles de Gaulle in French with English Translation overlay

“Do you want power? If thousands of you are in the streets, then this must be the case. Fine, try to seize it from the army and its tanks.”²³⁷

Everyone walks offstage except Janet, who returns to her seat stage left at the café table, and Someone in a Tree, who sings and then continues to “watch” the empty stage.

Someone in A Tree

I’m a fragment of day.

If I weren’t who’s to say

Things would happen in the way

That they’re happening.

It’s the fragment, not the day.

It’s the pebble, not the stream.

It’s the ripple, not the sea

That is happening.

Not the building but the beam,

Not the garden but the stone

Only cups of tea

And history, And someone in a tree.²³⁸

²³⁶ Judaken, 221

²³⁷ Kristin Ross, *May ’68 and Its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 65.

²³⁸ Sondheim.

5.2.11 Letter 11 -- Farewell

My Very Dearest Madame Genêt Janet Flanner:

Today is my last day in Paris, a day that began very early this morning. Unable to sleep, I decided to visit one last Parisian landmark as a gesture of remembrance. Even as I write these words, Dear Madame, it seems odd to talk about recollections of people I never knew and places I've never been. Perhaps a better word is reverence, for it captures the sense of gratitude I feel toward you and all of the women who lived and worked and, if I may be so bold, loved in the tiny rooms overlooking these streets and alleyways of La Rive Gauche.

In the beginning, I viewed this trip to Paris as a journey through which I would discover the remains of a glorious resistance movement. As these letters reveal, my time here has been fruitful in this regard. Yet, there is one last shadow who peers around corners and gazes at me with a mixture of amused tolerance and gentle rebuke as the last few hours of my time in Paris melt swiftly away. I leave the hotel and walk up the hill toward the Odeon Theater looking for No. 12 rue l'Odeon. Soon I see the storefront only a few steps ahead. It is now a lingerie and notions shop, but I can close my eyes and be transported to November 17, 1919, when Sylvia Beach, an American living in Paris, opened Shakespeare and Company, Paris' first combination English language bookstore and lending library, in that very spot! She opened the shop across the street from *La Maison des Amis des Livres*, the bookshop owned by Parisian Adrienne Monnier, who by this time had become Sylvia's lover. Together, these two women would create an intellectual home for many of the most gifted writers of their generation.

As I peer into the shop window, I see a framed photograph tenderly placed among the lotions and fine silk. The image shows Miss Beach standing in the very spot where I now stand and a tall, slender James Joyce leaning against the entrance. Sylvia looks so young in this

picture, a woman small in stature yet possessing an indomitable spirit that was never satisfied living within the boundaries of the possible. Sylvia's long and tempestuous relationship with Joyce reads as both a tale of tragedy and nobility. She was among the first to believe in Joyce's genius and in 1922 published his novel, *Ulysses*, at a time when no one else would risk distributing the controversial work. In your 1963 essay on Beach, you write of her courage in putting everything at risk to publish Joyce's masterpiece. I particularly remember the closing line of that essay, "She always gave more than she received. Publishing *Ulysses* was her greatest act of generosity."²³⁹

Ultimately, when the book was successful, Joyce severed his professional ties with Sylvia and moved to another publisher, a betrayal that left her burdened with enormous debt and facing financial ruin. Of course, the truth may well be more complex and that journey is for others to pursue. I do know that Sylvia was loyal to the end, and her autobiography reveals no enmity to this man with whom she had a chaste but intensely emotional relationship. Noel Riley Fitch's writings give us a tantalizing glimpse into the relationship when Sylvia describes her feelings about Joyce in a private letter to her family: "It's all bumps when you are working with him. I prefer peace and being with people who have some human sense of the existence of others."²⁴⁰

Looking at the image of Sylvia staring back at me from the window of the boutique, I moved by this woman's quiet integrity. I step closer to the building and place my hand against the window, which has been chilled by the brisk morning air. I close my eyes and listen for remnants of the voices of those early 20th century writers, who ventured in and out of the doorway of Shakespeare and Company and who populated the lives of Sylvia and Adrienne. At first, there is only silence, and it seems that the literary spirits who still reside within the confines

²³⁹ Flanner, 2.

²⁴⁰ Fitch, Noel. *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company. 1985. 327.

of the rue l'Odeon have no words of wisdom for me today. Then I remember a story Sylvia tells when a moment of everyday resistance transcended despair to sustain her through the worst of times. I have been carrying my tattered copy of Sylvia's autobiography, *Shakespeare and Company*, in my tacky tourist bag, and I sit down on the deserted sidewalk in front of 12 rue l'Odeon and read my favorite part.

The story begins in 1941 in Nazi-occupied Paris. All of Sylvia's French friends were concerned for her safety and urged her to leave Paris for a hidden place in the country or even to return to America. She refused, of course, and chose to focus her energy on keeping *Shakespeare and Company* open as a respite to the difficult times. She hired her young friend Françoise Bernheim as her clerk. Françoise had been studying Sanskrit at the Sorbonne and had been expelled along with all of the other Jewish students and faculty. Sylvia describes life in Paris as the two women attempted to sustain the bookstore during the occupation.

As I went about with Françoise, I shared with her some of the special restrictions on Jews—though not the large yellow Star of David that she wore on her coat or dress.... We could not enter public places such as theatres, movies, cafes, concert halls or sit down on park benches or even on those in the streets.²⁴¹

After one or two excursions, the American bookseller and the Jewish student realized that to be walking around the streets of Paris was dangerous, and they chose to stay close to home. Fate intervened, however, and a simple act of resistance shattered her attempts to sustain the illusion of normal life within the cataclysm of the Nazi occupation. Sylvia recounts that it was a morning early in December when

A German officer, who had got out of a huge gray military car, stopped to look at a copy of *Finnegans Wake* that was in the window. Then he came in and, speaking perfect English, said he would like to buy it. "It's not for sale." "Why not?" My last

²⁴¹ Beach, Sylvia. *Shakespeare and Company*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1956. 214.

copy, I explained. I was keeping it. For whom? For myself. He was angry. He was so interested in Joyce's work, he said. Still I was firm. Out he strode, and I removed *Finnegans Wake* from the window and put it safely away. A fortnight later, the same officer strode into the bookshop. Where was *Finnegans Wake*? I had put it away. Fairly trembling with rage, he said. "We're coming to confiscate all of your goods today." "All right." He drove off.²⁴²

Over the next two hours, Sylvia and her neighbors removed all of the books from the shelves of Shakespeare and Company and carried them in boxes and laundry baskets to a hiding place in the fourth floor of her building. She found carpenters who dismantled the bookshelves and even removed the light fixtures, while a neighbor painted over the sign that hung over the door. By the time, the Nazis arrived, there was only an empty room.²⁴³

Sylvia spent the next several months hiding in the homes of her friends in Paris. Finally, in August 1942, the Nazis came to arrest her. It was 9 a.m. one morning when the truck arrived. She only had time to gather a few articles of clothing, her Bible, and the Collected Works of Shakespeare before she was taken to a large open truck where she found other American women were already packed in closely together. The Nazis drove the truck through the narrow streets of Paris stopping at any address where they might find American women targeted for arrest.

At each stop, the women in the truck waited breathlessly as the Nazis banged on the door with their rifles. When the soldiers returned alone, the women cheered and roared with laughter, simultaneously mocking their captors and celebrating the freedom of those who had managed to escape. Sylvia and the other Americans were interned in eastern France for six months. When

²⁴² Beach, 216.

²⁴³ Ibid.

she was released through the intervention of a member of the Vichy government, she returned to Paris and stayed well hidden until the end of the war.²⁴⁴

The chill of the early morning penetrates my light coat and rushes, quite uninvited, throughout my travel-weary body. Yet I do not want to move, for I am afraid that any shift in my focus will cause me to lose contact with those who had come to bid me farewell. Ultimately, flesh triumphs over spirit and I stand and break the spell. As I reconnect with my surroundings, I see with new eyes that people are already beginning their day on the rue l'Odeon. They are coming out of their flats and getting ready for work or school or simply walking to the café for breakfast. Deeply immersed in their everyday lives, I suspect they are thinking about the day ahead with its tasks and obligations with no idea what the day will hold. Yet, it is in this very act of living one's life, prepared for whatever may happen, that I find the potential for resistance that exists in everyday life. Sylvia Beach teaches me that it is possible for ordinary people to respond to extraordinary circumstances with great courage. We simply never know when the moment will arrive and we will be tested.

It is time to go, my dear Janet. The plane departs in a few hours. While I am sad to leave, I am also ready to go home and resume my own everyday life, which has been greatly enriched by the time we've spent together here in Paris. You have been my very patient guide, my muse, my friend, and companion on this trip, and I thank you.

In my study at home is a reproduction of a *Life* magazine photograph, where you are sitting in Deux Magots, your cup of café crème on the table in front of you. You appear to be deeply immersed in your newspaper as the daily life of Paris swirls, seemingly unnoticed, all around you. I love that photograph, Madame, for it has played a very large role in helping me to construct my internal conversation with you. In this picture, you seem to be apart and

²⁴⁴ Fitch, 1985, 407.

untouched by all of the sweet seductions of the Parisian landscape, but that is only because you have managed to become that most unusual creature, the observer, who lives within and without, who comments from a distance and yet who is integrally and passionately connected with your surroundings. This is the lesson you taught me through your writing and the way of working I will take with me as I move on to the next adventure.

Merci et au revoir, cher Genêt. Je suis éternellement reconnaissant et restera votre ami.

Your friend and world traveler,

Jeanne

6.0 A PAIR OF RUBY SLIPPERS

Pastiche: a text that brings together elements of many different works in a respectful, yet jocular way.

6.1 PROLOGUE

I first encountered the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum on one of my weekly journeys to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh when I was ten years old. I sat in the large leather chair in the adult reading room and devoured the first three chapters in a state of complete rapture. Then, through the magic of my library card, I was able to take the book home and continue my vicarious journey into the adventures of Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man, Cowardly Lion, and the Witch of the West in all her glorious wickedness. Not long after that, my life changed for good when my father capitulated to my mother's unending cajoling and purchased our first television set. (Papa believed we should read the classics and listen to opera and didn't trust popular culture one single bit. My very first act of resistance was sneaking away to my neighbor's house to watch *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*. I should have known I was somewhat odd because my favorite character was Lady Elaine Fairchild, with whom I totally identified as a kindred spirit.)

The introduction of television into our home that year was timely because it established one of my family's most memorable rituals, the annual Sunday evening screening of the MGM classic, *The Wizard of Oz*. The extraordinary nature of the event was evidenced by the fact that over my father's initial strong objections, my mother allowed us to eat our dinner in front of the brand new black and white television set, the only time all year that such a transgression was allowed. My brother and I joined our parents in the living room with our plates resting securely on the four shiny black snack tables we'd borrowed from Mrs. Jacobson who lived next door. Finally, we had reached the pinnacle of first generation American assimilation, and for that one evening, my brother and I felt like we had fallen into the rabbit hole and emerged as the Andersons or the Cleavers, or maybe even the exalted Nelsons.

The Wizard followed me through multiple phases of my life. As a teenager, we spent one Sunday evening watching the *Wizard* at the home of my Uncle Joe and Aunt Ruth, who represented the prosperous arm of my mother's extended family. The occasion was the arrival of the family's first color television. Watching Dorothy emerge from her house for her first magnificent view of Oz on the new gadget's fuzzy approximation of technicolor was actually something of a disappointment. Much later, I saw the film in its theatrical re-release. It was then that I realized that television would never be able to capture the grandeur of the Ozian experience that was destined to be seen in a theater.

When I first learned of Gregory Maguire's *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* in 1995, I tried to resist reading the parallel novel, which offers the beloved story from the witches' point of view. My attempts at self control were short-lived. Almost against my will, I found myself purchasing the novel and by page 3, I was hooked. Maguire turned the entire story inside out and fractured my childhood notions of a land where the

immutability of good and evil could be relied upon without question. The Witch, whose real name was revealed to be Elfaba (after L. Frank Baum), was a green-skinned girl who lived as a committed social activist. Her identity as the Witch was nothing more than propaganda, a construction created by the evil wizard who sought to scapegoat a radical revolutionary seeking to overthrow his oppressive regime. I was in proto-Marxist heaven.

My final ascent into wizardly nirvana did not occur until 2003 when *Wicked*, a musical based upon Maguire's book, premiered on Broadway. Even in an age of public confession where one is expected to pull back the curtain and expose even the most mortifying aspects of our secret lives, I cannot easily step out of my closet and divulge my addiction to this fluffy little piece of American musical theater. Suffice it to say that this particular dark tale involves squandered fortunes and many hours standing in line with dads of the show's pre-tween fans in a freezing ice storm waiting for tickets ("Oh, yes, my daughter is *so excited* to see the show. Ah yes, my daughter also knows all the words of all the songs! Yes, they are so cute at that age!"). I confess to having hidden stores of tacky green and black souvenir mugs, t-shirts, programs, and assorted jaunty little caps. In the spirit of full disclosure, there was an occasional fantasy of someday taking my rightful place as Elfaba belting "Defining Gravity" from the top of the floating tower at the end of Act I.

I might have been lost in the abyss of my popular culture dreamstate had it not been for one voice, whose reputation as a serious scholar seems to have not been tarnished by his own fixation with Oz. In 1992, Salman Rushdie took time out from writing literary masterpieces to pen a short, sweet little essay titled, *The Wizard of Oz*, which opens with these words, "I wrote

my first story in Bombay at the age of ten; its title was *Over the Rainbow*.”²⁴⁵ It was almost more than a committed Ozophile could bear.

In his essay, Rushdie deconstructs the film so that it moves from a celuloid cliché epitomized by “there’s no place like home” to a trope on exile. I also learned from Rushdie that humor can surface within the most serious of texts. In describing a land filled with flying monkeys and wicked witches, Rushdie notes there is only one character who elicits his searing emnity, Dorothy’s dog. Toto played a relatively minor role in Baum’s book, but in the film, the dog has the enormous responsibility of exuding cuteness at every turn. Rushdie finds a moment to confess:

Toto: that little yapping hairpiece of a creature, that meddlesome rug. I couldn’t stand Toto. I still can’t. As Gollum said of the hobbit Bilbo Baggins in another great fantasy: ‘Baggins: we hates it to pieces’.²⁴⁶

I honor Rushdie in the testimonio that follows less for his loathing for the little dog than for his willingness to insert silliness at just the right moment in the essay.

Woven within the many strands of resistance that emerge within this testimonio are elements of queer culture. William Pinar’s 1998 book *Queer Theory in Education* was invaluable in helping me identify how this discourse, which I knew through a cultural studies lens, could be instrumental in the process of creating a curriculum of liberation. In particular, Pinar’s statement that “homosexuality has been regarded not only as not assimilable into mainstream culture, but as exhibiting revolutionary potential”²⁴⁷ led me to believe that resistance can be imagined within the process of reconciliation of these two polarities, assimilation and revolution. To assure that this reconciliation does not lead to the complete appropriation of

²⁴⁵ Salmon Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*.(London: British Film Institute, 1992), 52.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁷ William Pinar, *Queer Theory in Education* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum & Associates). 4.

queer sensibility into the sluggish currents of the mainstream, this testimonio draws on the sacred mother tongue of queer culture, drag. After all, drag queens were the matriarchs of the queer revolution, as evidenced by their ferocity on the evening of June 28, 1969, when for the first time, homosexuals socializing at the Stonewall Inn, a well-known gay bar in Greenwich Village, violently resisted the ritualistic harassment perpetrated upon them by New York City police. No small irony that what have now become known as the Stonewall Riots took place only two days after the June 26 funeral of Judy Garland, who starred in the film as the lovely Dorothy Gale and who ultimately became the icon of queer culture..

All of this is to say that the testimonio that follows is a pastiche of all of the many incarnations of the *Wizard of Oz* I have encountered and celebrated over our long relationship. After some reflection, I have decided against offering a Rosetta stone of some sort to help decipher some of the more arcane references in the text. Instead, I will offer only one small word of advice to guide the reader through the adventure of Ruby Slippers. Make Oz your home; allow yourself to slide effortlessly into the sensibility I have created and imagine that you can be of this world rather than outside looking in. I think Rushdie says it best:

So Oz finally became home, the imagined world became the actual world, as it does for us all, because the truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started out to make up our lives armed only with what we have and are, we understand that the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that 'there's no place like home,' but rather that there is no longer any such place as home except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 57.

6.2 THE SETTING

The story takes place in Oz, a faraway land located between the Sea of Endless Nostalgia and the Great Cultural Divide between that which is East and North and that which is West and Mid. Long ago, Oz was a lush and beautiful land where people lived together in harmony until one fateful day when a stranger arrived, bringing odd ideas and foreign customs. After completing a pseudo-omniscient, multiphasic, intentionally overcomplicated environmental scan (a concept foreign to the Ozians, who concentrated solely on doing good and therefore had very little time for scanning), the stranger crowned himself the Barely Competent Wizard of Oz and began to consolidate his power. Happiness was outlawed, thinking was banned, and speaking the truth was punishable by terrors too awful to imagine. Those few dissidents who did not escape to the neighboring Kingdom of Sah-Berb-Bee-Ya, were imprisoned and forced to endure long sessions listening to tapes of the Wizard's speeches, in which he droned on endlessly in a strange and horrible style called Charisma. But by and large the ever trusting Ozians complied with the Wizard's decrees as their freedoms were eroded, their treasure plundered, and their hopes dashed upon the rocks of the endless ambition of a humbug.

6.3 THE CHARACTERS

The Barely Competent Wizard came to Oz after his escape from his former home in Town of Province in the Kingdom of Mass-ACHOO-sits, where the people suffer dearly with upper respiratory and allergic afflictions. The tale is told that his Wizardship had been elected

Mayor of the Town of Province, and in his first official act declared that every home must immediately build a small, cramped closet, where all who lived in the town would hide when the tourists arrived, which they did in huge numbers every summer to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings and the gaiety of the indigenous culture. The people revolted, adopted the slogan, “Closets = Death” and threw the cad out of office.

Even though the residents of Town of Province are kind, gentle, and tolerant with open and forgiving hearts, they are of a single mind when it comes to disgraced politicians—Banishment! However, before they sent the disgraced one on a search for a new home, they offered him a complete head-to-toe makeover, a copy of the DVD *Judy Garland at Carnegie Hall*, and a fabulous new wardrobe. The Barely Competent Wizard managed to escape by stealing an environmentally friendly balloon powered by hot air generated by his over-inflated rhetoric. His landing in Oz was met with great celebration; for sadly, Oz (and Pittsburgh, of course, the home of our story’s lovely heroine) are the last places in the Galaxy where the unexpected arrival of a disgraced politician falling from heaven in a hot-air balloon is seen as a sign of better days.

Munchkins is a generic term used in Oz to describe *not yet persons*, that is those who have not reached what the Barely Competent Wizard calls fully developed pliability and susceptibility to obedience training. Ozians are, and have always been, born with the complete intellectual maturity, strong independence, and mostly good judgment. It is the duty of society, according to the Wizard’s standards-based approach, for the State to intervene and create institutions to assure that *not yet persons* devolve into the fullness of their pliability and obedience. This was not a simple task, for every newborn Munchkin comes into the world filled with boundless creativity, a complete understanding of philosophy and psychology, physics and

chemistry, cosmology and astronomy, calculus and trigonometry, mixology and gastronomy and, of course, all forms of magic. Most importantly, Munchkins are all born merely and really quite sincerely peaceful. The Barely Competent Wizard recognized immediately that such miraculous beings must be retrained in order to assure that there is never even the slightest possibility that they may fully utilize their extraordinary talents. So, our Wizard, who knows little and cares less, immediately created Skooles, institutions of dread and horror where Munchkins are forced to attend for 12 long, tortuous years. In the end, those Munchkins who achieve full pliability and who pass the competency examinations in obedience, empty headedness, general wickedness, and propensity for mean spiritedness, take their rightful place in Ozian society as high-ranking generals, attorneys, business and corporate leaders, and of course politicians. Those who resist and cling stubbornly to their kindness, creativity and intelligence tend to drop out of Skool, bringing shame upon their families and ultimately earning a meager living as artists and writers.

Freires work in the Skools and are charged to constantly maintain discipline and to dispense to the unsuspecting Munchkins the standardized daily dose of *managerium curricularium* or Mange, as the Ozians reverently refer to it. This vile potion is produced in large quantities by parasitic, slug-like creatures called out-of-town, highly-paid, for-profit consultants. Beginning at the tender age of 6, Munchkins are forced to attend the Skools, where they are held against their will and for their own good and where the Freires deliver daily doses of the dreaded Mange. (There was once an attempt to introduce Mange to pre-Skool Munchkins, but it was defeated—for even Barely Competent Wizards have some remnants of a conscience.) Despite the evil that now pervades the land, it is said that deep in the night, the elders whisper ancient tales of times gone by when brave Freires encouraged the Munchkins to resist obedience and to embrace their true identity as fully functioning non-compliant beings. But be careful what

you believe in the Land of Oz, for such stories are now forbidden and punishable by unspeakable torture. Rumors abound that those who speak the heresy are forced to listen to taped dramatic readings of the Barely Competent Wizard's latest encyclical, "Raising Test Scores on Standardized Accountability Measures Through the Use of Postmodern Strategic Deconstructions of Multiple Data Driven Instructional Methodologies" until they scream for mercy and explode.

Winged Monkeys are members of the Society of the Acolytes of the Rich. Their job is to grovel at the feet of the Barely Competent Wizard so that they may shower him with undeserved approval and gifts of frankincense and fur, which are essential in cold Ozian winters.

The Polymorphous Personal Assistant (PPA) has three heads, each representing one element of what Ozians believe is his deepest, truest self: one ignorant, one heartless, and one cowardly. As a guide, mentor, and coach, he is consultant to several prominent clients, who are thrilled with his services but who also must be adept at avoiding the treachery of his multiple faces. Having graduated from Jones-A-Bobby University with a major in insipid mediocrity, the PPA achieved his greatest fame as the head censor on the award winning television series, *Wet Wing*, the after-death adventures of the Crawl Rove, Beloved Hero of the Wizard, who drowned in a tragic boating accident and was ultimately devoured by a school of wild Cheneys. The PPA currently has a lucrative contract with the Wizard to do nothing whatsoever.

The Wretched Wench of the West, Galobila Zayshon, serves as Deputy Assistant Adjutant to the Barely Competent Wizard. She writes his speeches, keeps his calendar, screens his calls, grooms the Polymorphous Personal Assistant, and carries out various and sundry of the Wizard's vile decrees. It is rumored that Galobila is the intermediary between the highly-paid, out-of-town, for-profit consultants who keep the Wizard supplied with the detestable Mange and

the winged monkeys who provide the cash. Her favorite color is morning sickness green; and as she walks along the beach at sunset, she loves to envision a world where everything is produced by cheap overseas labor, unions are banned, and the world is one giant sweatshop, all in the service of being able to shop at the mall 24 hours a day.

Princess-Pal Rhonda the Good is the ruler of the dissident province of Qappa, where she has taken over the Skool, freed the Freires, and uses her powerful magic to protect the Munchkins from the Barely Competent Wizard and his evil minions. Qappa floats high above the earth, where the Princess-Pal can assure that no harm will befall the Munchkins in her care. Here, Mange is banned; and the Munchkins and their Freires engage in all the forbidden pleasures—reading, writing, and imagining; singing, dancing and resisting; drawing, painting and creating; and for those who have the gift of flamboyance—fashion design and musical theater. Rhonda the Good governs Qappa with patience and understanding and a love of exotic culinary delicacies, known in lands far and wide as “cafeteria food.” She is the Wizard’s mortal enemy but fears him not for she is immune to his powers, being both blessed and cursed with an unfortunate tendency to laugh out loud whenever she is in the presence of Charisma.

Ruby Slippers is a kind and obedient girl who lived in the gray plains of Pittsburgh with her Uncle Gumm, who was a polka instructor, and her Aunt Frances, who accompanied him on the banjo and the accordion—often simultaneously. Sadly, Ruby was forever running away from home to escape both the sound of Aunt Frances’ recitals and the relentless teasing at school, where wicked children tormented her about her name. For Ruby was an orphan, and although she knew that Aunt Frances and Uncle Gumm loved her so completely, they would not explain anything about her very odd name. Once after a few too many barrels of beer, Aunt Frances told our young heroine the story of a very famous Queen, who was also known by the name “Ruby

Slippers,” a moniker adopted during a brief and unfortunate foray into show business. This was little comfort to our young Ruby, who longed for a better life somewhere, anywhere else.

6.4 IN THE BEGINNING...

It was the worst of times in Oz until a lovely young girl from Pittsburgh arrived most unusually and our story begins haiku-ishly.

Good comes out, comes out

As house falls upon the Wicked

Joyous news is spread.

By now the story of the timely demise of Annatola Coulterola, Wicked Wench of the East, has been celebrated far and wide. Both the film and the Wideway play became popular culture icons among the Ozians, much to the dismay of a strange group of outworlders, known as cultural-studiers who wrap themselves in sackcloth and ashes, engage in intellectual self flagellation (now illegal in most civilized cultures) and whose endless search for hidden and obscure meanings in texts is defeated if only one brave soul can still glean a drop of pleasure from a work of art.

As the tale begins, Ruby Slippers, our young heroine, finds herself stranded in the Land of Oz, without reliable transportation back to Pittsburgh. The lovely, if slightly overdressed, Gee the Gee, as she was lovingly known among her close friends and colleagues, has come and gone. The reader may recall that after her arrival in a bubble, Gee introduced Ruby to a large group of Munchkins, who had been liberated by the death of the wicked Coulterola. Joy abounds as guilds and leagues of Munchkins celebrate their return to freedom. With a wave of her wand,

Gee the Gee banished the Mange, transformed the Skools into palaces of critical thinking and freed the Freires from the evil spell cast upon them by the Coulterola, allowing them to return to their historic task of guiding the Munchkins to their highest level of personal and intellectual noncompliance.

After the celebration, Gee the Gee warned Ruby to quickly leave Oz, for now that she had trounced the Wicked Wench of the East with her house, Annatola's evil twin sister from the West, Galobila Zayshon would be a dangerous and lethal enemy. Ruby, having no idea how to restart her house, was told that she must go to Qappa City, and find the very good, but very mysterious, Princess-Pal Rhonda, who would certainly know how to help her find her way back home.

6.5 THE LADIES

Ruby is eager to find Princess-Pal Rhonda and after appropriate fare-thee-wells, she leaves Munchkin Land and begins her journey to find the wonderful, but frustratingly hard to find, Qappa City. After many hours of walking, she is tired and lies down to rest in an enchanting and natively planted meadow. She is awakened from a deep sleep by a loud chorus of voices singing nearby. Ruby, who has always been a curious child, gets up and follows the sound of the music. As she gets closer, she realizes that while there is a chorus of voices, and they seem to be singing not one song with multiple harmonies, but several different songs at the same time.

Immersed in the act of listening to the music, Ruby follows a winding meadow path to find the source and is shocked when she practically collides with a most remarkable creature. It

was tall, taller than even the tallest old apple tree that grew in Mrs. Hamilton's orchard at home, with a slender body—*curvalicious*, as Uncle Gumm would sometimes say in describing one of his polka ladies, which would cause Aunt Frances to whack him in a sensitive spot with her banjo. The creature was wearing a gown woven of rays of light that seemed to flow simultaneously in all directions. Ruby's eyes traveled slowly upward, past the shapely torso and the long, slender arms. For a moment, the vision both blinded and bedazzled Ruby so that she did not immediately take note of one significant detail about the lovely of lovelies standing before her.

When Ruby's eyes moved beyond the well-muscled shoulder, the fact that she did not swoon and fall to the ground in a dead faint can only be explained by a strong Pittsburgh constitution and unadulterated loathing for anything resembling a scene. For you see, and there is just no politically correct way to say this, standing before our dear Ruby was an unusually and exceedingly peculiar and altogether quite impossible to describe creature with, yes count them, three heads, all female and each singing a different song.

The first head was stunning, olive-skinned, with dark eyes and thick black hair that hung like a silken curtain to her waist. She was singing a catchy tune about how she had had turned back time in order to rescue someone before they fell prey to gypsies, tramps, and thieves. Periodically, she would toss her head so that her long silky hair would fly in all directions, often hitting the lovely face directly to her left. This appeared to greatly annoy the center head, as it would any sensible person, who looked to Ruby as though she had been crowned with a large yellow helmet of hair that could withstand even the strongest gust of wind. Her sparkling blue eyes were half closed as she breathlessly sang "Happy Birthday" to someone with the odd name of Mistapres Adent. The third head was certainly ah...well groomed and seemed to have a nice

personality, but also had a very large nose and fine, straight hair that Aunt Frances might describe as somewhat stringy. Yet, she had the most beautiful voice, and Ruby was immediately mesmerized by her songs about people loving people being quite fortunate and yet encouraging them to return to the way they were.

Truth be told, Ruby was too thrilled to be shocked. Here was a magical creature who could sing three different songs at once but whose voices blended together to create a sound that immediately brought Ruby into a state of complete and total joy. She desperately wanted to sing along and to become part of the ladies' song. But as she opened her mouth, they stopped singing.

The lovely lady with the long black hair turned to Ruby and asked, "Have you seen her?"

"Who?"

"Is she here?" inquired the blonde in her breathy voice.

"Hello Gorgeous!" exclaimed the third. "We've been waiting—we heard she was here, but it's getting late and we have things to do and places to be and we just don't have all day to stand around here and wait for her to show up. Oye vey, I'm a little *faclempt* at the very idea that she might be here!" she added as Ruby marveled at her ability to speak at a very rapid rate indeed.

"I beg your pardons, kind ladies, but for whom you are waiting?" Ruby asked as she curtsied politely.

"Why Ruby Slippers, of course. She's here in Oz!" They replied in unison.

"Oh," Ruby responded, somewhat surprised to hear that anyone other than the Munchkins was aware she had arrived. "Well, here I am. It's me. I'm Ruby Slippers."

“Honey, don’t make me laugh. You cannot be Ruby Slippers, the Exalted Empress of Drag, High Priestess of Impersonation, the Iconic Impresario of Illusion, because you are just an ordinary, brainless girl.”

“But I am!” replied young Ruby.

“You are what, dear?” whispered the center lady.

“I am an ordinary, brainless girl, and I am Ruby Slippers.,” said our girl with tears in her eyes.

“STOP! Now you’ve gone and hurt her feelings. Have you no heart at all?” the lady formerly known as the one with the beautiful voice screeched loudly at her companions. “It’s okay, bubbie, have a bagel with a schemer and you’ll feel better.”

“Don’t feed her!” demanded the first. “Those bagels are for Ruby! The three began to argue, creating quite a din.

“Please don’t fight! It is true, I am Ruby Slippers and my house traveled here to Oz all the way from Pittsburgh. You must believe me. My Aunt Frances did tell me that I’m named after a very famous queen who was in show business, but I never believed that it could be true.”

“Don’t you worry, honey,” breathed the lady in the center after Ruby had shared the entire story of her arrival in Oz. “You are a very brave girl, and with a few square-cut and pear-shaped accessories and a little makeup, you could be a movie star!”

“And popular!” added the third, who was already planning a small, but tasteful soirée to introduce Ruby to a better class of people.

Ruby turned to the ladies with a smile, “Well, since I’m here and you are all here, perhaps we should get to know each other. I’ve introduced myself, who might you be?”

“Don’t you recognize me?” The three ladies respond in unison. “Why, it is very clear who I am, you silly, rude little girl” they all protest, like a Greek chorus of talking heads. They once again began to argue among themselves about the relative fame of their individual identities.

“I do apologize. Please don’t take offense. I don’t travel in glamorous circles like yours. I can tell you that if our church choir back in Pittsburgh looked like you, the people would be thrilled to pieces,” Rudy responds. “But, may I ask that you please speak to me one at a time. It is good manners, and besides I cannot understand a word you are saying!”

“We like to ignore social conventions, dear.” said the blonde. “Why bother, after all?”

Then they all begin to speak.

“Think about it, honey, what’s the point?”

“Be courageous, Baby Girl, defy expectations.”

“Don’t let another living soul tell you who you are or what you are!”

“Be yourself, Ruby dear, and everything will be just fine.”

Despite the fact that the ladies were all speaking at once, Ruby was suddenly able to discern each voice independently and to listen carefully to their wisdom. She could not help but remember the torment she had experienced at the hands of her peers back in Pittsburgh simply because she was different. The thought of home brought Ruby back to reality, and she knew it was time to continue her journey.

“Well, I’m afraid I must go now,” she said sadly. “I have a long way to travel before I can find my way back home. I’m going to Qappa City to find the Princess-Pal Rhonda, the Good. Can you help me?”

Ruby’s words caused the ladies’ expressions changed from friendly to apprehensive.

“Sorry, we have to go,” they said. “Good luck, honey.” And then in a burst of shimmering light, they were gone.

“People come and go so quickly here.” Ruby thought to herself and began to prepare herself to continue her journey. She couldn’t help but wonder if she had imagined the entire encounter with the ladies.

At that very moment, she looked down and saw a small paper sack sitting at her feet. She retrieved the bag and as she opened it, the smell of freshly baked bread rose up and tickled her nose. Inside the bag was what she could only describe as a small, round loaf of bread covered with tiny black seeds and with a small hole in the center. Next to the bread was a small container that held a creamy white substance and an accompanying plastic knife.

Suddenly, Ruby was starving. “Aha!” she thought. This must be the bagel that the ladies offered me before they left. I know I should hurry, but I haven’t eaten in such a long while. A small stop for lunch can’t possibly hurt.” She ate voraciously, enjoying every luscious morsel. Only later did she think that she might have heard voices whispering in her ear as she finished her meal.

Ah yes, my beauty.

Something to erase the memory.

Something tasty and enticing to the smell

Poppy seeds.

Poppy seeds and magic will do the deed quite well.

6.6 RHONDA

Ruby was weary. She had walked and walked, often stopping to ask for directions.

“Right ahead.” one would say with a nod.

“Not much further to go,” said another smiling.

“You are getting really close,” with a nod.

“Almost there,” with an expansive gesture of the arm.

Qappa City. Was it simply a myth or an apparition that only Ozians could see? Ruby was feeling as though her exhausted spirit was about to surrender when she felt a sudden cool breeze on her face; it was sweet and fragrant and it made her smile. Then in response to a memory of something that was yet to be, she closed her eyes and breathed deeply as though no breath had every been so welcome and refreshing. When she opened her eyes, she saw it, Qappa City, floating high over her head, as though it had been with her all the time. It had no constant shape or color but seemed to transform from a golden pyramid to a silver square to an emerald-green sphere spinning at great speed. Each shape generated light waves speeding away in all directions and illuminating the sky.

“Welcome to Qappa City.” And in an instant standing before her was a magnificent woman with glowing dark skin and eyes so kind and welcoming that a lonely child could fall into her soul and find the deepest, safest, most loving dream of home, family, love and total acceptance.

“I am Rhonda, the Princess-Pal of Qappa.” The woman seemed to speak, but the sounds really just appeared like a soft lullaby that settled gently upon Ruby’s mind.

“Oh, your Majesty, I am Ruby, meek and small,” whispered Ruby, sinking down one knee.

Rhonda reached out her hand and helped Ruby to her feet. “Please, child, get yourself up off of your knee. No one bows down in Qappa, Baby, it’s bad for your posture.”

The woman who stood before Ruby was a large and powerful force of nature. She floated above the ground and seemed to have the ability to be in one place and then appear in another without having to travel between the two points. (Hence, Ruby’s earlier comment about how the normal restrictions on coming and going often seem to be suspended in Oz!).

Miss Rhonda (the Princess-Pal had asked that Ruby drop the official title, for it only made the Munchkins giggle) took Ruby’s hand and in a quantum leap, they were transported to Qappa.

“Don’t look down, Child, for there is nothing down there that is as important as what we are doing up here!” Rhonda smiled as Ruby turned to peek at the rapidly receding ground.

Ruby thought, “Oye, she’s right. I am feeling a bit *faclempt*...” She stopped in mid-thought. “*faclempt*??? What does that mean? Where did that word come from? I’ve never said that word before. I can’t remember...”

“Where are you child?” Rhonda’s gentle voice brought Ruby back from the edge of her panic.

“Right here, Miss Rhonda. Right here.” Ruby replied, glad to be distracted from her perplexity.

“All right, Baby, let’s take the grand tour!”

As they began to walk around Qappa City, Ruby's mind was immediately filled with a sense of intense curiosity, and the questions just tumbled from her lips as she looked around in wonder.

"Why don't we fall to the ground? How can Qappa float up here in the sky? Are there other places like this in Oz? How long can we float up here? What happens when there's a great storm?" Rhonda patiently answered every question. She began by explaining that Qappa didn't exactly float, it actually was moving through space and time at a very rapid rate and yet staying exactly where it was.

"It has to do with defying gravity and learning to live with contradiction." Rhonda remarked as though that was a perfectly reasonable answer to the question.

"But what does that mean?" Ruby persisted.

"Do you see all of those beams of light?" Rhonda asked. "Well, those beams are generated by the imaginative and creative thoughts the Munchkins think when they are learning something new and exciting. Now, look at the river of light beneath us. All of those creative light beams join together to form a rainbow. We rebuild Qappa every day, directly over that rainbow, which, in point of fact, keeps us hovering in a stable elliptical orbit, right here, way up high."

Ruby nodded as more and more questions flooded into her mind.

"Of course, it also has a lot to do with particle physics and string theory. Would you like to talk about dark matter now or later? How's your calculus, Ruby Dear, do you need a refresher course?"

"No ma'am, not right now." Ruby replied feeling a bit queasy.

"All right, then. Let's keep exploring then, shall we?"

They traveled through Qappa from one end to the other. Everywhere Munchkins were singing and dancing, writing and reading poetry, acting in dramas and comedies, and creating paintings and sculptures. If the streaming beams of light were any indication, all of the Munchkins were certainly thinking deeply imaginative and creative thoughts. Ruby soon recognized that as the Munchkins created new works of art in every conceivable medium, they were simultaneously exploring the history and literature of many worlds and tickling each other's fancy with quadratic equations and theoretical formulations concerning Einstein-Rosen bridges and black holes, which were, of course, based on Schwartz and Menzel's work that had been originally developed here in Oz.

"What kind of a place is this?" Ruby asked more to herself than to Rhonda.

"It used to be a Skool, one of those dreadful institutions established by the Wizard to control the Munchkins by teaching them to be compliant and accommodating. Then many years ago, a small group of Freires came to me for help. They were determined to resist the Wizard's education reform models to return to the traditional ways of loving the Munchkins to a perfect point of noncompliance.

We began with small acts of dissent, then we resisted and ultimately we rebelled. We used magic to recall the ancient powers, first to imagine, then to dream and then to create. And here we are today, creating a place where Munchkins can learn and evolve into the beings they were always meant to be."

Just then...

Miss Rhonda tilted her head slightly sideways and seemed to concentrate in a very serious way. "Ruby," she said with a smile. "We have a visitor. Please come with me."

6.7 A POLYMORPHOUS VISITOR

Before Ruby could speak, Miss Rhonda had taken her hand and together they had, well disappeared and appeared in just an instant. They seemed to be floating outside of Qappa, on a kind of a sheltered balustrade looking out over the Ozian sunset.

“Hello, Rhonda,” three voices spoke in perfect unison.

“Hello, Harvey,” the Princess Pal replied. “You’re looking unwell, Dear, are you working too hard?”

“Don’t call me Harvey. You know I hate it when you do that. I am the Polymorphous Personal Assistant, Grand Fizier to the Barely Competent Wizard of Oz. You *will* call me Sir Polymorphous if you know what’s good for you.”

Ruby could barely contain herself. “Why it has three heads!” she whispered to Miss Rhonda.

“It’s bad manners to speak in a whisper, little girl,” said the three-headed creature.

“I’m sorry, but I’ve never...that is...I haven’t ever seen...I mean where I come from it is customary to only have one...”

“Just be quiet, dear. Harvey will be leaving soon.” Rhonda said. The three-headed fellow didn’t seem to be in any hurry to take his leave.

“The Wizard is not one bit happy with what’s going on here at Qappa, but you already know that don’t you Rhonda, dear.” He hissed. “All of this light beaming and art making. Our most exalted, yet barely competent Wizard thinks that all of this fussing with the Munchkins is elitist and wastes valuable time. Frittering, his Wizardship would say, those Munchkins are

frittering away their time and adding nothing to the Gross Aggregated Economic Disgustingness of the Environmental Degradation of Oz.”

“Why, Harvey Dear, I’m so pleased. You have been paying attention to what we do at Qappa. And you are so right, Baby, we love to fritter—it makes the Munchkins so happy.”

Rhonda said with a smile, and from inside of Qappa, we hear the sounds of Munchkins giggles.

“Don’t you dare laugh at the Wizard, you little heretics. If you are not careful, we’ll come in and force feed you the appropriate doses of Mange ourselves.”

“And who have we here?” the nasty heads all said together as they turned and stared with six piercing eyes at young Ruby. “You must be Ruby Slippers, who dropped her shabby little house on our gloriously wicked Annatola Coulterola, sister the much beloved Galobila, Wretched Wench of the West.”

“It was an accident!” Ruby exclaimed. “I didn’t mean to kill anybody.”

“You’ve interfered with Galobila Zayshon! Why, nobody does that, no way, no how! And she’s looking for you, my pretty. Why don’t you just turn yourself in to us right here and now, and we’ll protect you, really we will. You and your little dog, Salman, too.”

“Why, I don’t have a dog.” Ruby answered in a puzzled voice. “Dog fur aggravates my eczema.”

Harvey responded with what might have been a smile. “Oh. Well, never mind, just come along with me and I’ll get you a dog that doesn’t shed, sweetie.”

Somehow Ruby knew that this plan might not be in her own best interest, so she stood even closer to Rhonda and politely said, “No, thank you.”

The heads turned to Rhonda and said with a sneer, “Harboring a fugitive, are you, Princess-Pal? Well, let’s just see if we can add that to the list of offenses committed by you and

your revolting Freires. You know we will ultimately figure out how to vanquish you and your loathed goodness.”

“Oh ho-ho rubbish. You have no power here, Harvey dear! Be gone before somebody drops a house on you, too!” Rhonda replied.

Harvey apprehensively looked up in the sky. “Harrumph” they said. “No one would dare to harm us—we are just too fabulous.”

At that moment, Ruby had the strangest feeling that she and Harvey had somehow met before. But of course that couldn’t be true. Surely she would have remembered. The Polymorphous Personal Assistant gathered up their dignity and walked off the end of Qappa and disappeared.

“My, my, such a fuss” Rhonda said slowly shaking her head. “All right now Munchkins, enough of this, time to go back to play!”

6.8 LIFE AT QAPPA

Later, Rhonda suggested that since she had apparently made some powerful enemies in Oz, it might be better if Ruby were to stay at Qappa until Galobila Zayshon cooled down a bit. Soon it would be time for the Winged Monkeys to return for the annual performance of the *Charisma Monologues*, the cultural event of the year at the Wizard’s downtown palace. Each year, the Winged Ones sit in postures of rapt and adoring attention while the Wizard delivered his 13-hour, solo ode to his own charm and personality. After several glasses of tepid Kool-Aid, a potent brew imbibed only by Winged Monkeys and their Wealthy Owners, the Wizard collects tribute from those who find him to be an innovative and resourceful leader, who brings a

compelling vision to all that he does. Finding new ways to use all of the Winged Monkey gifts would be a full time job for the Wizard's staff and would hopefully distract them from seeking vengeance against Ruby.

Ruby gratefully agrees, and for several months she lived and worked among the Munchkins and their Freires. Her calculus skills improved immensely, and she became lead string base player in the Qappa marching band. Ultimately, as a tribute to Aunt Frances, she wrote her dissertation on the postmodern epistemological influences that framed the ontological and performative aspects of several symphonies composed by the famous 20th century virtuoso accordionist, Weird Al Yankovic. At the live reading, light beams abounded.

One night, deep inside Qappa, Ruby was awakened by noises outside of her room. She rushed into the hall to find the Munchkins and Freires were all awake, looking concerned. Rhonda was speaking softly, telling them that there was great trouble in Oz and they must return to their rooms and rest for tomorrow would be a trying day.

"Imagine, dream, and create a peaceful night and day, my lovelies." Rhonda told her young charges and their guardians, but Ruby understood it was more than simply a good night wish.

"How can I help, Miss Rhonda?" Ruby asked. Rhonda took her hand and led her to a quiet corner.

"It's Harvey." Rhonda said in a worried tone. "He is in danger."

"The Polymorphous?" Ruby asked in astonishment. "You are worried about the Polymorphous? They said they wanted to vanquish you and force feed Mange to the Munchkins," whispered Ruby with a shudder, for in her time at Qappa, she learned about the

havoc brought down upon the bodies and souls of young Munchkins in the Wizard's dreadful Skools.

"It's time you knew the truth, Child. We were wrong to keep it from you, but Harvey was convinced that you were too young to understand." Rhonda continued. "Ruby Dear, Harvey is one of us. He was the leader of the Freire rebellion many years ago, and the Wizard declared him a traitor and issued a decree throughout the land that all who aided his cause would be imprisoned or worse." Fear gripped Ruby's heart, for she had heard the whispers of the aggressive interrogation methods used by the Wizard's troops that included long hours of listening to the Wizard exercise his charisma.

"Harvey has been working underground in the Ozian Resistance since then. The Polymorphous is a performative illusion that he uses to protect his true identity."

"Where is he now?"

"We don't know, Child. I've just learned that Galobila has somehow discovered Harvey's true identity and has sent the Wizard's troops to capture him."

Just then, there is a blinding flash of light in the heavens above Qappa, then a scream, and then silence.

THE END

Except for....

6.9 THE EPILOGUE

Well, dear readers, surely you are wondering how the Tale of Ruby Slippers ended. In fact, the choice is yours. As Rhonda would say, “Imagine, Dream, and Create” your own ending to the tale of our lovely Ruby and her friends in Oz. And my ending? While it is certainly true that a simple bucket of water could not destroy the wretched wickedness of Galobila Zayshon, a torrent of resistance erupting simultaneously from all parts of Oz could be great and powerful indeed. And what of the Freires and their Munchkins? Suffice it to say that in my wild imaginings, there are beams of light erupting from floating Qappas all over Oz to this very day, overseen by ever-delightful Princess-Pal Rhonda.

And what about the Wizard—can evil truly be vanquished forever? Well, in my story, there was great rejoicing, when after the defeat of Galobila Zayshon, the Barely Competent Wizard of Oz slithered away into the night to take a new position in the Kingdom of Sante Very Very Fey, where he seems to be fitting in nicely. When he finally left, the for-profit consultant slugs and their dreadful Mange all disappeared in a puff of nasty-smelling smoke.

And Harvey? Well, he escaped from the Wizard, defeated Galobila, and returned to Qappa to a heroine’s welcome. By now you must have guessed that Harvey was, in fact, the renowned performance artist Ruby Slippers, the most famous queen in Oz, who had revealed her true self during their encounter with young Ruby in the enchanted meadow. After the liberation of Oz, the poppy seed bagel spell was lifted, allowing dear little Ruby to joyfully remember the entire incident. Harvey, who adopted a new stage name, Frieda Peoples, graciously declined the invitation offered by the people of Oz to serve as the first democratically elected Wizard,

choosing instead to fly away with the very handsome William Morris who signed her to a five-year contract headlining at Caesar's Palace, where a strange creature known as a Celine Dion will perform as her opening act.

Ruby chose to spend her life in Oz and joined the faculty at Qappa, where she and her colleague Freires spent their time learning with the Munchkins who spread the joyous news that Imagining, Dreaming and Creating were now the law of the land.

Thank you, dear reader, for your patience and forbearance. I hope you have enjoyed meeting these characters, and that like me, having them come into your life has changed you for good.

THE HAPPY ENDING

(for real this time)

7.0 RESISTANCE CHRONICLES AS TESTIMONIO

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1989, John Beverley of the University of Pittsburgh published the essay *The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio*, in which he described this new form of narrative literature. To introduce testimonio as a new genre, Beverley used what he described as a paradigmatic text: *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, a first-person account of the life and struggles of a young K'iche' Mayan woman in Guatemala. Menchú's story of atrocities perpetrated upon indigenous people by Guatemalans of European descent was captured in a series of taped interviews with French-Venezuelan writer Elisabeth Burgos-Debray and first published in 1982.

The introduction of Menchú's text sets the stage for Beverley to describe one chapter in a decade-long struggle over issues of authenticity, authorship, truth, freedom and knowledge in both the cultural and academic sectors. During the 1990s, a period often referred to as "culture wars," the canon was being challenged by cultural workers—artists, writers, scholars—and defended by entrenched reactionary forces engaged in their own form of resistance against what was seen as democratization of both culture and knowledge.

In 1990, anthropologist David Stoll raised questions about the veracity of some of the details in Menchú's testimonio.²⁴⁹ Stoll's accusations and the responses of Beverley and other scholars in defending Menchú generated a dialogue about not only the authenticity of the

²⁴⁹ Beverley, John. *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 1989, xiv.

narrative form of testimonio but about the very nature of truth and knowledge, particularly within an academic setting. Questions regarding who has the authority to speak for disenfranchised populations were often subsumed within the discourse of how to situate issues of authenticity within the landscape of postmodernity.²⁵⁰ The ongoing conflicts within the academy are outside the scope of this study, but Beverley's groundbreaking definition of testimonial literature as a genre of resistance challenged the post-positivist view of the real and the role of the academy in the creation of knowledge. Beverley looked to the academy to generate

a kind of criticism/self criticism [that] would point in the direction of relativizing the authority of academic knowledge...but not to the rejection or abandonment of that knowledge. Rather, it would allow us to recognize what academic knowledge is in fact: not *the* truth, but a *form of* truth among many others, that has fed processes of emancipation and enlightenment, but that is also both engendered and deformed by a tradition of service to the ruling classes and to institutional power.²⁵¹

In this chapter, I will take the position that the three stories I have presented can be viewed as a testimonio, both individually and collectively. To do so, I will begin by offering multiple definitions of testimonio that illustrate how the various participants—the witness, the editor, and the public²⁵²—enact the creation of this narrative genre. I will then examine the discourses that seek to understand the roles of each of the testimonial actors, beginning with Gramsci's definition of the subaltern and expanded by the work of Spivak, Bhabha, Said, and other post-colonial theorists. The work of Beverly, Yúdice, Gugelberger, and Cruz-Malave provide insights into the evolving role of the editor and the public in the creation of meaning within the text. Finally, to take the testimonio to its most creative position as a catalyst for

²⁵⁰ Ibid., xvi.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 7.

²⁵² In this chapter, I will consistently use Gugelberger's terms to identify the testimonio's co-creators—that is, the witness, he or she who has experienced the events; the editor, the one who brings the stories into the narrative form; and the public, those who read and create meaning within the text.

resistance, it will be necessary to venture into the realm of Borderlands theory, introduced by Gomez Peña, where imagination and utopian longing generates a new territory for the testimonial stance. Within the Borderlands, I will reveal how each of the stories I have written constitutes a particular form of testimonio and that together they are a seamless web of storytelling and resistance.

7.2 TESTIMONIO DEFINED

Beverley offers a foundational definition for testimonio as

A novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet...told in the first person who is also a real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a life or significant life experience.²⁵³

This definition establishes clear parameters including a text and a first-person account by someone who has herself experienced the events about which she speaks. Implied is the reader who seeks to experience the life of another. He then situates the genre within the Latin American tradition.

The word *testimonio* in Spanish carries the connotation of an act of truth telling in a religious or legal sense—*dar testimonio* means to testify, to bear truthful witness. Testimonio's ethical and epistemological authority derives from the fact that we are meant to presume that its narrator is someone who has lived in his or her person, or indirectly through the experiences of friends, family, neighbors, or significant others, the events and experiences that he or she narrates.²⁵⁴

George Yúdice's definition adds the criteria of authenticity, truth and urgency by defining testimonio as

an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.)...the witness portrays his or her own experience as representative of a collective memory and identity. Truth

²⁵³ Beverley 1989, 31.

²⁵⁴ Beverley 1989, 3.

is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or exorcising and setting aright official history.²⁵⁵

Gugelberger and Kearney contend that testimonio's use of a literary format is in itself a form of resistance in light of the role of literature in the construction of difference. They suggest that "literature is usually produced by members of the dominant classes in society who tend to represent and naturalize difference as it is seen from their social and cultural position."²⁵⁶ They also expand the definition to include stance and positionality, noting that "in contrast to conventional writing about the colonial situation, which is produced at the center of global power...testimonial literature is produced by subaltern peoples on the periphery or the margin."²⁵⁷

Catherine Davies adds the element of hybridity when describing the unique nature of testimonio.

Testimonios are accounts of harrowing, usually political, events related by a witness or protagonist to a journalist or equivalent to set the record straight, to counter official versions of history. It is a hybrid narrative genre, akin to memoirs, autobiography, and fiction, in that it purports to be authentic and truthful yet necessarily uses rhetorical devices to persuade the reader to its cause. Testimonio is also a political act. Due to its factual or truth value, testimonio has been considered as extra- or even anti-literary.²⁵⁸

Maier and Dulfano contend that while "testimonial literature is clearly positioned within the context of Third World or resistance literature, its nature and forms are not nearly so clear cut...The central predicament in arriving at a definition of testimonial literature is that by its very essence, it resists classification and categorization."²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Yúdice, Georg in Gugelberger, Georg & Michael Kearney. *Voices for the Voiceless: Testimonial Literature in Latin America. Latin American Perspectives*, (18)3: 3-14, 1991, 4.

²⁵⁶ Gugelberger and Kearney 1991, 3.

²⁵⁷ Gugelberger and Kearney 1991, 4.

²⁵⁸ Davies, Catherine. Review of *Woman as Witness: Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women*, edited by Linda S. Maier and Isabel Dulfano. *Biography*, (27)4, Fall, 2004, 856.

²⁵⁹ Maier, Linda S. and Isabel Dulfano, eds. *Woman as Witness: Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American women*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004, 5.

Nevertheless, these authors do define salient characteristics of the testimonio.

The narrator of a testimonial text belongs to an oppressed, excluded, and/or marginal group and speaks/writes as a member of that group. In other words, the individual first-person singular subject (“I”) is replaced by the representative agents of a collective identity (“we”), thus introducing previously suppressed, subaltern voices into the mainstream.²⁶⁰

On the issue of truth vs. fiction, Maier and Dulfano take the position that

Testimonial text arises from specific circumstances or events experienced or witnessed by the narrator who is compelled to document them. As a ‘narration of urgency’ (depicting incidents of war, oppression, revolution, imprisonment, etc.), a testimonial text often presents a subjective impression of an objective yet inexpressible reality. Consequently, it functions on two seemingly opposite levels—referential and aesthetic—and admits both fiction and nonfiction.²⁶¹

This echoes the position taken by Craft:

Simply put, can a testimonial text like Menchú’s faithfully depict the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Given the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction in postmodern culture, a more applicable distinction may be proposed between varying degrees of truth—empirical and poetic.²⁶²

These authors have defined testimonio as form of resistance literature, focusing particularly on the liberatory aspects of the genre. The next step is to examine the testimonio’s participants and to identify how their evolving roles alter the dynamics of how the narrative is created and interpreted.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Craft Craft, Linda J. *Novels of Testimony and Resistance from Central America*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1997, 190.

7.3 TESTIMONIAL WITNESS

7.3.1 The Subaltern Witness

In their definition of testimonio, Gugelberger and Kearney use the term “subaltern peoples” to describe those who witness the events that ultimately are captured in the testimonio. The history of the modern use of the word can be traced to the writings of Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*—a collection of writings that centered on the dynamics of ideology and power and the struggles of subordinated classes to transform oppressive state and economic formations.²⁶³

The term subaltern, which Apple and Buras contend Gramsci used as a code word for proletariat to avoid prison censors, represents those potential subjects who engage in, and are therefore the victim of, a hegemonic system of compromises developed by elites to secure the assent of oppressed groups.²⁶⁴ This Gramscian language lays the groundwork for defining the testimonio as existing within a power structure, where what is at stake is the potential emergence of the agency previously relinquished by the subaltern in the context of hegemonic oppression. This is affirmed by Edward Said, who also draws upon Gramsci as he expanded the definition of the subaltern as follows:

The word ‘subaltern,’ first of all, has both political and intellectual connotations. Its implied opposite is of course ‘dominant’ or ‘elite,’ that is groups in power. Resonances of the word *subaltern* derive from Gramsci’s usage in which, ever the astute political analyst and theoretical genius, he shows how wherever there is history, there is class, and that the essence of the historical is the long and

²⁶³Hoare, Quintin, and Nowell Smith, G., eds. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers, 1971, 21.

²⁶⁴Apple, Michael & Kristen Buras, eds. *The Subaltern Speak: Curriculum, Power, and Educational Struggles*. New York: Routledge, 2006, 5.

extraordinarily varied socio-cultural interplay between ruler and ruled, between the elite, dominant, or hegemonic class and the subaltern.²⁶⁵

Some writers use the term in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes - a person rendered without agency by his or her social status.²⁶⁶ Others, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak use it in a more specific sense. She argues that subaltern is not

just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie....In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern - a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern....Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don't need the word 'subaltern'...They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern."²⁶⁷

In her classic text "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak raises the issue of whether we can ever really capture the voice of one who has been made voiceless until we dismantle the system that steals the voices of those it considers dispensable. She asks how the subaltern consciousness can really be identified and describes when there is no subaltern subject that can know and speak itself.²⁶⁸ She is speaking to fact that the nature of the identity of subaltern is defined by the elite group, the center defining the margin. Since the very existence of the subaltern identity is defined by its oppositional nature to hegemony, where is the solid ground upon which the subaltern subject stands? In this context she is, as Apple and Buras point out,

²⁶⁵ Said, Edward. in Gugelberger, Georg. Introduction. *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996, vi.

²⁶⁶ Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 233.

²⁶⁷ de Kock, Leon. Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa. *A Review of International English Literature* 23(3): 29-47, 1992, 29-47.

²⁶⁸ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Edited by Charles Nelson and Leonard Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 271-313, 1988, 285.

questioning the implication that there is a single and unitary underlying consciousness that constitutes the basis of subaltern solidarity and resistance.²⁶⁹

It appears clear that the testimonial subject is not a singular voice speaking a singular truth. As Gugelberger writes,

Not only does the testimonial literature occasion the transformation of former objects into subjects, the very nature of the subject is also transformed. Whereas the Western writer is definitely an author, the “protagonist” who gives testimony is a speaker who does not conceive of him/herself as extraordinary but instead as an allegory of the many, the people.²⁷⁰

As Rigoberta Menchú states in her testimonio, “I’d like to stress that it’s not only my life, it’s also the testimony of my people...My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people.”²⁷¹ Beverley contends that testimonio is the voice of the subaltern. But it is not the intention of this voice simply to display its subalternity. It speaks to us as an “I” that nevertheless stands for a multitude. It affirms not only a singular experience of truth in the face of grand designs of power, but truth itself as singularity.²⁷²

Sommer refers to this aggregation of subject identity as the “plural subject of testimony. Instead of an inimitable person, Rigoberta is a representative, not different from her community but different from us.”²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Apple and Buras, 19.

²⁷⁰ Gugelberger 1996, 8.

²⁷¹ Menchú 1985 in Gugelberger 1996, 8.

²⁷² Beverley 1989, 27.

²⁷³ Sommer, Doris. 1991. Rigoberta’s Secrets. In *Voices for the voiceless: Testimonial literature in Latin America*. Edited by. Georg & Michael Kearney *Latin American Perspectives*, (18)3: 32-50, 1991, 38.

7.3.2 The Editor as Co-Creator

At this point, the scholarship on testimonio has revealed an empowered individual subject who willingly gives voice to subaltern people who represent a community, ethnicity, or nation. Yet the testimonio cannot exist without the partnership between the witness and the individual who captures, translates, mediates, and co-creates the narrative. Gugelberger suggests that

We are at somewhat of a loss as to what to call the persons who produce testimonios. The most common practice for the production of testimonial narratives is for some sort of “maeuseris” (midwife), editor, or collaborator to work with a member of a subaltern community to produce a written text. This collaboration has implications for the erosion of the boundary between ethnography and literature, but what concerns us here is a yet more basic double erosion of the motion of the author... The identity of the individual author is first of all eroded by the ambiguous collaboration between the editor and the witness... There is a blurred distinction between the authorial duties of the ethnographer or editor and those of the person who is the main source of the testimony and who is accordingly the testifier, as we prefer to say, the witness.²⁷⁴

Menchú’s account was, as Doris Sommer quite correctly points out, “mediated at several levels by Elisabeth Buros-Debray, who records, edits, and arranges the information.”²⁷⁵

Maier and Dulfano expand the notion of authorship

Menchú’s testimonio was initially read as an alternative form of legal deposition for a people long denied access to state justice and forced to bring their case before the court of world opinion. In many respects, it was produced by committee, edited by a *ladina* writer in Paris and then shaped toward specific political goals in Mexico City by Menchú and a team of *compañeros* exiled from Guatemala. But the testimony, nevertheless, offered itself as the concrete experience of a woman and the formation of her revolutionary consciousness in a historically specific time and place.²⁷⁶

At this point is it helpful to introduce a somewhat different approach to attempting to define the relationship between witness and editor. Jacques Derrida has written of the experience of viewing a work of art and suggests that when “we look at a painting we see the

²⁷⁴ Gugelberger, 1995, 18.

²⁷⁵ Sommer, Doris. No Secrets. In *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, edited by Georg M. Gugelberger. Durham & London: Duke University Press. 130-161, 1995, 131.

²⁷⁶ Maier and Dulfano, 7.

frame as part of the wall, yet when we look at the wall, we see the frame as part of the painting.”²⁷⁷

Derrida describes the moment when the artist has completed the painting, which he calls the *ergon*, the work of art.

The picture is not yet complete, for he then adds the *parergon*, like the frame of a painting, neither the work (*ergon*) or outside the work (*hors d'oeuvre*), neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below, it disconcerts any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it gives rise to the work...The *parergon* is a form which has as its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy.²⁷⁸

This relationship, where the *ergon* is the work of art and the *parergon* is that which surrounds the work of art but at the same time is part of it, can be used as a way to conceptualize the relationship between the witness and the editor. If the witness is the subject of the *testimonio*, she becomes the *ergon*, taking her place as the central focus of the reader's experience of a work of art. The editor, in this model, is the changeling, that which exists as its own life form but then becomes one with the subject for that moment of creation. This willingness to efface oneself in the service of the *testimonio* represents the act of relinquishing the illusion of singular authorship in favor of a unified, co-created, narrative work of art. In this model, the relationship between the witness and the editor has evolved from one with clear and prescribed roles to one that is fluid with permeable boundaries.

An example of this manner of co-created *testimonio* can be found in the work of Arnoldo Cruz-Malavé in his 2007 work, *Queer Latino Testimonio, Keith Haring and Juanito Xraviganzo: Hard Tales*. *Hard Tales* is the story of Juan Rivera, who was the lover of pop-art

²⁷⁷ Marriner, Robin. Derrida and the Parergon. In *A Companion to Art Theory*. Edited by Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 349-357, 2002, 350.

²⁷⁸ Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting*. Translated by G. Bennington and I. McLeod. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Originally published 1978, 1987, 54.

superstar Keith Haring in the years prior to Haring's death from AIDS in 1990. In this testimonio, Cruz-Malavé captures the outcomes of a series of interviews with Rivera, who bears witness to his role in Haring's complex quest to shed his privileged, middle class whiteness and immerse himself in the squalid, exuberant, lethal and joyous street life of Queer New York in the 1980s. In his life and his art, Haring used everything he found in his environment to "receive, embrace, and incorporate the purportedly unnatural, demonized alien other" within the context of his art.²⁷⁹ Rivera's testimony attests to the fact that their lives imitated art, as their relationship is portrayed in the testimonio as a dual embrace of that which was both magnetic and abhorrent in each other's history and personality.

The nature of their relationship caused Gayatri Gopinath to begin her review of *Hard Tails* by asking a question: "How does one tell the tale of another without enacting the epistemic violence that so often accompanies such projects of representation? We know all too well...the dangers of the project of 'giving voice' and speaking for the socially marginalized other."²⁸⁰ This passage reads as though there is a nascent consensus developing within at least one component of the discourse that acknowledges the potential for "epistemic violence" in any form of representation where there is appropriation of voices of the other. Such a risk lies primarily in the erosion of any potential for resistance when stories, in contexts where there is an unequal power relationship, are appropriated either for aesthetic or political purposes. No one appears more cognizant of the treachery of navigating that question than Cruz-Malavé. His account of writing Juan Rivera's story reveals a personal struggle as he attempts to carry out his role of co-creator with the witness in delivering the testimonio.

²⁷⁹ Cruz-Malavé, Arnaldo. *Queer Latino Testimonio, Keith Haring and Juanito Xtravaganza*. New York: PalgraveMacMillan, 2007, 7.

²⁸⁰ Gopinath Gopinath, Gayatri. Review of **Queer Latino Testimonio, Keith Haring and Juanito Xtravaganza: Hard Tails**, by Arnaldo Cruz-Malave. *The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics*. <http://hemi.nyu.edu/hemi/en/e-misferica-61/gopinath>, 2007, 1.

I myself would be seduced by the trope. I myself would become...entangled in it. And for more than ten years, as I followed the train of Juan's relationship with Haring, I would agonize about the distressingly unseemly seduction of retelling his tale. And though I felt uncomfortable with, and inadequate to, the task of retelling—a task that had somehow befallen me and that kept tugging at my heart and conscience, insistently—I couldn't let it go.²⁸¹

In this instance, the editor placed himself squarely in the center of the testimonial stage. There is a shift in stance—signifying a willingness on the part of the editor to embrace the vulnerability that arises from the seduction of the trope, as well as the all too real possibility of the blurring of boundaries between the pain of the witness and the pain arising from the voyeuristic retelling.

What if I was secretly feeding a prurient interest—mine as well as others'—for Latino lives under duress? What if I was aestheticizing—and thereby neutralizing—sheer wretchedness? What if I was turning into palatable, tasty entertainment truncated lives?...What if I was providing someone with a walk on the wild side so that someone, me included, could finally feel...and taste that joyous sigh of relief, that jolt that may be experienced at reliving 'lesser' lives at a distance, safely sconced at home, in one's comfortable armchair.²⁸²

Centralizing of the role of the testimonio editor in this text should be viewed not solely as a change in how such relationships are structured, but rather as part of an expanded definition of what forms of oppression were legitimized by an expanded definition of testimonio. Cruz-Malavé is seeking to reveal new manifestations of oppression that ignored the rapid spread of AIDS within the gay community; or worse, were willing to allow the virus to carry out society's dream of eliminating the lives of human beings it viewed as dispensable. The text asks the reader to accept the actions of Guatemalan death squads and the U.S. government's inaction in the face of the pandemic as divergent yet related aspects of the same human impulse, namely to identify and then extinguish anything that is other.

As Gopinath points out,

²⁸¹ Cruz-Malavé, 8.

²⁸² Ibid., 8.

If testimonio often speaks back to the state, and attests to and witnesses state violence, the queering of testimonio that Cruz-Malavé enacts here also speaks back more broadly to a logic of social death that consigns entire populations—queer, of color, poor, HIV positive—to oblivion. The inescapable power and importance of this book lies in its courage to write against such oblivion.²⁸³

7.3.3 The Public and Its Sphere

The final piece in the construction of the testimonio lies in the very public, that is to say published, nature of the testimonio. This point of view is echoed by Sommer who distinguishes testimonio from autobiography, when she states “unlike the private and even lonely moments of autobiographical writing, testimonios are public events.”²⁸⁴

The public sphere as defined by Jürgen Habermas represents “the social sites or arenas where meanings are articulated, distributed, and negotiated, as well as the collective body constituted by, and in this process, ‘the public.’”²⁸⁵ This is the site where the testimonio is transformed from private text to resistance narrative, since the public exchange serves to facilitate the subversive power of the text. The notion of the public sphere is further expanded within the post-colonial discourse that identifies the characteristics of those spaces where the subaltern can fully express her voice. Homi Bhabha contends that the colonizer and the colonized—that is, the dominant force and the subaltern—exist within a particular space where they are mutually dependent upon one another for their individual identities. Rather than a dichotomous situation between the colonial oppressor and the liberated other, Bhabha theorizes that hybridity is created within a Third Space of Enunciation where temporality is disrupted in

²⁸³ Gopinath, 1.

²⁸⁴ Sommer 1991, 44.

²⁸⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. 305. Originally published 1962, 1989, 305.

the exchange of multiple identities of subject and other.²⁸⁶ Whereas Spivak seems to foreground the impossibility of linguistic subversion, Bhabha gives more credit to the colonized subject's linguistic agency and her ability to use that agency within an alternative third space as a tool of subversion and resistance.

It is within this third space that the testimonio exists within a new set of rules, a new freedom, and a new means of exchange. In this strategic position within the public sphere, where new linguistic rules are invented and then enacted, testimonio seeks to disorient to the status quo. However, the third space of enunciation does not exist at the margins of the public sphere, for it is the very act of migrating the testimonio from the margins to the center that is the source of its power. At the same time, this migration to the center raises a new kind of peril. The greatest threat to the testimonio comes not from its courageous stance of critical resistance, but from the potential of its seduction by the hegemonic voices of the center. It is important to acknowledge that acquiescing to the appropriation of dissent carries great rewards with what often appear to be small accommodations—a smoothing of the edges, an invitation for the lonely voice of accusation to join an established chorus of gentle reminders, an almost imperceptible erosion of the freedom to question the frame of allowable expressions of discontent, and settling in to the luxury of a life of permitted exoticism within a safety valve of ritualized dissent.

Testimonio has the potential to serve as the antidote to, rather than the victim of, such seduction as it embraces a public stance. Edward Said describes this stance as that of the exile, one who exercises her agency by choosing to reject both assimilation and exclusion, and to instead exist as the perpetual, uncontrollable thorn in the side of both those who oppress and those who accommodate.

²⁸⁶ Bhabha, Homi. *Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2004, 54.

7.4 TESTIMONIO AS EXILE

Said's foundational essay on the subject of exile begins with the lines,

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrifying to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.²⁸⁷

Yet, while acknowledging the terror of the unhealable, Said continues by describing the exile as a border crosser, someone who has been freed from the illusion of safety and comfort in an unknowing world.

The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience.²⁸⁸

Gugelberger has written of the role of exile within the academy as one that challenges the accepted canon, as evidenced by the conflicts around the genre that have been discussed earlier in this chapter. It is tempting to conceive of testimonio, then, as the intellectual exile, the consummate outsider within the intellectual discourse on resistance. Yet, in so doing, testimonio is relegated to the margins where it has no chance at all of effecting change in the rigid, and often reactionary, thinking of the academy. To attempt to integrate the genre, however, raises the specter of appropriation of strategies of resistance, which then leaves them impotent and diluted.

Representative of the oppressed subaltern, the repressed and homeless, the exiled and the migrant, this genre...is so mobile that it is permitted entry into the institution of higher learning...The literary nomad or subaltern speech as that which cannot really be spoken is always outside of the home/base/canon. Its battle field is the border area between transgression and acceptance. If we accept,

²⁸⁷ Said, Edward W. Reflections on Exile. In *Out There, Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Edited by Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Cornel West. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. 357-63, 1990, 367.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 368.

that is, integrate, the outside work into the home of the canon, we violate the authenticity of the genre. Yet if we do not integrate such genres, we are forced to continue policing the canon with the most conservative policies.²⁸⁹

Here, Gugelberger reveals the paradox facing those who embrace testimonio as a resistance narrative while seeking to situate it within the confines of the very system it is seeking to resist. He continues:

We must monitor the system's ever increasing capability and capacity to always turn the "anti" into the "pro," counter discourse into discourse, the anti-canonical into the requirement. Needless to say, the first thing is to stay alert, the second is to historicize rather than to interpret. We need to show in testimonial discourse, specifically...how this movement from an authentic margin has been betrayed by including in the Western canon, which can be considered as yet another form of colonization.²⁹⁰

And so the testimonial co-creators add to their cloak of constructed identities the mantle of the exile. In this guise, they effortlessly cross borders between hegemonic structures, all of which seek to appropriate their multiple identities. They may find themselves as objects of interpretation within the confines of the academy, where conflicts around the authenticity of their voices are enacted and where compliance is rewarded by a comforting dose of Wachowskiesque blue pills offered on fine china with white linen. Whether the testimonio begins its life as a text published in academic journals or whether, as with the case of Juan Rivera's story, it makes its way into the mass culture landscape, the public becomes the co-creator of the reality of whatever form of death squad the oppressor sends to silence those whose voices are raised in resistance. To carry out that function means to reject appropriation and to embrace a new identity as the exile who can imagine and then inhabit a quite different landscape, which I will suggest can be best found within the Borderlands.

²⁸⁹ Gugelberger 1995, 11.

²⁹⁰ Gugelberger 1996, 13.

7.5 THE BORDERLANDS

Maxine Greene writes of the awakening of imagination as a way to create an alternative environment, constituted in freedom and leading to action.

The recovery of imagination...lessens the social paralysis we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done in the name of what is decent and humane. I am reaching toward an idea of imagination that brings an ethical concern to the fore, a concern that, again, has to do with the community that ought to be in the making and the values that give it color and significance.²⁹¹

It has been my contention throughout this inquiry that decency, humanity, and ethical concerns can all be generated through the work of artists engaged in cultural resistance. One particular form of this resistance can be seen in the genre of installation and performance art, where during the last decade of the 20th century Latin American artists functioned as the new-age shamans of the avant garde. These artists conjure ancient symbols of resistance to European conquistadores, using aesthetic strategies designed to challenge established norms of cultural production. An exemplar of this genre is performance artist and cultural critic Guillermo Gomez-Peña, who situates his cultural practice within his identity as a “fluid border crosser, an intellectual coyote--a stealer of ideas...seeking to force open the matrix of reality to introduce unsuspected possibilities.”²⁹² After years of living a life creating insurrections within conflicting first and third-world global worldviews, Gomez-Peña proposes an alternative, a hybrid landscape that has come to be known as the Borderlands, where he works to decolonize the intersection between opposing forces.

²⁹¹ Greene, Maxine. *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts and Social Change*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 1995, 35.

²⁹² Gomez-Peña, G. *Temple of Confessions*. New York: Powerhouse Books, 1995, 6.

I oppose the sinister cartography of the New World Order with the conceptual map of the New World Border—a great trans- and intercontinental border zone, a place in which no centers remain. It's all margins, meaning there are no "others," or better said, the only true "others" are those who resist fusion, mestizaje, and cross-cultural dialogue. In this utopian cartography, hybridity is the dominant culture and monoculture is a culture of resistance practiced by a stubborn or scared minority.²⁹³

Gomez-Peña's 1994 installation, *Temple of Confessions*, is a three-dimensional manifestation of the Borderlands in real time and space, a materialization of imagination, beamed down from the mother ship into the mainstream art world as an act of defiance by a transcultural pseudo-flaneur. In the installation, Gomez-Peña and his collaborator Roberto Sifuentes, outrageously costumed as post-modern pre-Colombian saints, sit within individual 15-foot tall Plexiglas cases, like anthropological souvenirs of Borderlands excavations. The room is filled with forgeries of iconic objects, appropriated Anglo-visions of Borderlands culture—velvet paintings, border shop replicas of religious statuary, jeweled plastic skulls, votive candles, and amulets all constructed to protect the innocent. These objects are carefully placed throughout the room, suggesting a vision of the sacred interrupted by intrusions of the vulgar. Visitors to the gallery are invited to use the kneelers positioned in front of each of the actors as an opportunity to confess and electronically record their sins against humanity. Over the course of three years and five cultural institutions, hundreds of people accepted the artists' invitation to kneel before them and to have their confessions recorded. Each penitent's confession is an individual testimonio offered as an act of contrition within a Borderlands juxtaposition of the intimate and the exposed. The artists, serving in their roles of exilic witness and editor, withhold absolution

²⁹³ Ibid.

by their silence but offer instead the small comfort of a safe place within which to speak aloud of sin and the dream of redemption. Such is the power of the Borderlands.²⁹⁴

The importance of Borderlands theory as the site of the emergence of the testimonio is to authorize an authentic shift in the definition of how power is identified, re-distributed, rejected, and/or re-formed. The testimonio instantiates this shift by its memesis of strategies used by artists who thrive in the Borderlands as dissidents and fools, making use of a

motley assemblage of methods for bringing political issues to an audience outside the insular art world's doors. They appeal to a viewer who is confronted by an increasingly privatized and controlled visual world. Humor, sleight of hand and high design are used to interrupt this confrontation and bring socially imperative issues to the very feet of their audiences.²⁹⁵

The Borderlands has, in this sense, become the solid ground upon which I stood to exercise my imagination and to create my own testimonio. I began this chapter by outlining my task as one that would identify the distinguishing characteristics of testimonio. In so doing, several clear definitions of the protagonists and their roles as well as the actualizing function of the public emerged from the inquiry. What also emerged is an evolution of terms and identifiers as the concept of testimonio was challenged, reframed and challenged again. The organic nature of testimonio as a resistance narrative has allowed it to be used by new populations and to be integrated into new theoretical frameworks. More importantly, I contend that this evolution has allowed testimonio to retain its fundamental character of dissent while allowing it to be more nimble, more adaptive, and therefore more effective as a resistance strategy. Throughout this inquiry, I have called upon the work of artists to illustrate various forms of critical resistance, and the testimonios I have created are intended to fall within this creative frame. The three

²⁹⁴ From 1990-2000, I served as Executive Director of the Three Rivers Arts Festival, an arts organization that presented year-round visual and performing arts programming in a variety of galleries and theaters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.. Three Rivers Arts Festival was part of a consortium of cultural organizations that commissioned and presented Temple of Confessions.

²⁹⁵ Thompson, Nato. *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*. North Adams, Massachusetts: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004, 15.

stories, which I intend to be viewed as the conflation of creative activity and rigorous inquiry, stand as individual texts; but as I began the process of interpreting them, I came to believe that each falls in a particular space along the evolving continuum of testimonio as a resistance narrative.

7.6 INTERPRETATION OF THE STORIES AS TESTIMONIOS

7.6.1 The Trial of Doctor Bill

Beverley's original description of the testimonial framework offered a clear and stable set of identities for the protagonists. Here, the subaltern witness relates her true story of oppression to the first-world journalist/editor/academic. The reader/public hovers over the text, prepared for conflict by bringing Popperian²⁹⁶ clashing frameworks to transform the testimonio into a space where contested ideologies can be projected upon the witness and her story.

The Trial of Doctor Bill uses the vehicle of a theatrical production to illustrate the potential for the quest for social justice to triumph over those voices who seek to silence and extinguish dissent. The central protagonists, including Maxine Greene, Ella Baker, Bernice Johnson Reagon, the Prophet Elijah, Saramago's character the Doctor's Wife, and ultimately Bill Ayers, tell their stories using the dramatic devices provided the theatrical form. In this text, I have chosen to utilize the exact words written or spoken by the various characters, and my intent is that the individual stories of resistance survive, intact and identifiable, as they are integrated into the parable of the tribunal. This testimonio is aligned with Beverley's original paradigm where

²⁹⁶ Here I am referring to Karl Popper's 1965 text, *The Clash of Frameworks*, which contends that individuals bring a basic set of ideas and beliefs to every interaction. Recognition of these beliefs is essential before divergent points of view can seek common ground. Popper, K. R. *The Myth of Framework: In Defense of Science and Rationality*. London: Routledge, 1965.

the experiences of the oppressed are captured by the editor and translated for a larger audience.

In this text, I am visible, yet invisible; present, yet absent; I construct the dramatic architecture of the play, but I surrender my voice to that of the witnesses.

7.6.2 Letters from Paris

The original model of the testimonial encounter has been subsumed into a more complex framework as other discourses began to integrate the testimonio into their ontological and epistemological frameworks. To utilize these new frameworks, I imagined an encounter where the subaltern witness manifests her radical heterogeneity while maintaining her individual identity and agency. Her struggle is to relinquish the illusion of individuality and embrace the collective while retaining the strength and resilience that comes from her unique history. Ultimately, it is the fact that she exercises her individual agency by choosing to express the multiple faces and voices of the subaltern that gives her the strength to find solid ground from which to express both her collective identity and her individual resistance.

Joining the witness is the editor, expressed as multiple, changing identities reflecting various ages, gender identities and ethnicities. The editor in this testimonio represents both impermanence and multiplicity, which complement the radical heterogeneity of the witness. Here, the editor is an indispensable actor in the testimonial drama, the manifestation of parergonic nature of the relationship, with but not of the witness community, yet an essential voice in the telling of the story.

In the *Letters from Paris* testimonio, I move out of the shadows to serve as the narrator of what I conceived as a seamless web of connected stories of dissent. I offer the student resistance movement of May 1968 as the explosive force that thrust a nation into the Borderlands; Émile

Zola, whose haunting *J'accuse* letter served as the conscience of an era; World War II resistance fighters who challenged a nation's collective descent into the spiritual Gehenna that was Vichy; and finally the women who helped shape the literary and creative spirit of Paris in the first half of the 20th century.

Like the Doctor Bill testimonio, the letters from Paris contain the actual words written by the various dissenters I engage. However, my role as letter writer is present for the reader; it is my voice and their voices; my story and their stories. My intent was to dissolve the false dichotomy of author's presence/absence and to make her voice in the text appear quite natural. I see this testimonio as emblematic of Derrida's parergon, for it is my journey to Paris that sets the stage for the telling of these stories of dissent. Also, it is also the story of my gradual enlightenment as to the power of the form of everyday resistance that propels the ordinary individual into a Borderlands realm where the opportunity for extraordinary acts of courage is within her grasp. It is in this realm where resistance becomes the norm and accommodation the aberration.

7.6.3 A Pair of Ruby Slippers

In the third and final incarnation, the landscape changes again and the singular witness representing multiple voices is replaced by multiple witnesses each representing individual manifestations of oppression. There now emerges a multiplicity of stories as the notion of subalternity as solely a post-colonial phenomenon is replaced by the universality of oppression in the age of globalization. Witnesses become editors, editors recognize their own oppression, and the boundaries between telling and re-telling dissipate. In this chaos of shifting roles, there is no safety or security. The images of oppression and hegemonic manipulation of individual

worldviews flash in a dizzying array of universal agony, perhaps in the service of Empire or Capital or some other invisible yet omnipresent evil.

It is at this moment that the subject can begin the descent into the delusion of safety that is accommodation and obedience, or she can choose to recognize the prison she creates through offering her own acquiescence upon the hegemonic altar of oppression. The act of swallowing the red pill with its infinite varieties of imaginative possibilities leads to the immediate recognition of a new truth. She embraces her identity as co-participant in the creation of Foucault's panopticonic structures of oppression; and with her first deep breath, she breaks free. At the moment of enlightenment and recognition of her role in the collective psychosis of hegemony, the subject reawakens as Exile in the Borderlands.

In *A Pair of Ruby Slippers*, the testimonio, freed from all constraints, thrives in the heart of the Borderlands. Here, humor and parody are tools of resistance, as unseen forces engage all of the witnesses in a dance of joyful absurdity that mirrors the dominant culture while expressing a complete disregard for all it holds as sacred. This testimonio is Gomez-Peña's *Temple of Confessions*, where sins of commission and omission stand side by side and absolution is based upon the purity of one's heart, which in the Borderlands of Oz is easily visible to all. It is a constantly transforming landscape of resistance, where identities appear and disappear quite oddly, and where the trickster coyote sheds her academic disguise and conjures Baum's iconic characters to perform their sacred dance camped out as Drag Queens and Wizards. Ultimately it is a Technicolor Xtravaganza of shifting identities and subversive disguises, where the reader can embrace a utopian happy ending, or construct yet another alternative universe where worlds collide and wizards prevail. In my universe, the story begins with banishment and ends with exile as the Barely Competent Wizard is expelled from the Borderlands and moves on to another

reality, where charisma is currency and where monkeys with wings will come to adore him yet again.

7.7 SUMMARY

These three testimonios reflect the trajectory that the genre offers to those who are willing to ride the winds of change into the territory of Borderlands culture. Together, I believe that they offer a unified manifestation of resistance as expressed in a narrative form. The testimonios were imagined within an environment of freedom, as a means to express the learnings from an inquiry into the nature of dissent in whatever form best suited the telling of the story; to the extent that they are successful, they become both medium and message.

8.0 A BRIEF AFTERWORD

8.1 THE LEARNINGS

As I approach the end of this phase of my doctoral studies, I wanted to write a few words about this inquiry and the dissertation that seeks to communicate the learnings it generated. These learnings have been profound and yet tantalizingly incomplete. I discovered that as I carried out my exploration of the framework of critical resistance combined with an incursion into a new epistemological landscape, I jettisoned the familiar quest for immutable answers in favor of a search for new questions. In the process, I have called upon a multiplicity of voices, all giving testimony of their acts of resistance. Freed from the boundaries of space and time and enticed into the Borderlands by an arts-based trickster, the voices were sometimes quite forceful and difficult to restrain. Other times they were maddeningly silent. I ultimately learned to trust my instincts and to turn to my more corporeal mentors and friends, who have always been there to help me find the solid ground I needed to complete this process.

Earlier when I was describing the intent of the inquiry, I stated that the individual testimonios would ultimately emerge as a single unified testimonio of resistance. The question became how would that unity manifest and how would I provide necessary evidence of singularity. In light of my intent to be in the world described in this inquiry, I certainly recognize that there is a version of my own story woven within the testimonios. As the prescient observer of the various phenomena that constitute the inquiry, I wondered if perhaps my role as co-creator

of the stories was the unifying theme. While these contentions are true, they seem both unseemly and insufficient to justify my claim of a coherent unity among the various stories. I experienced an ontological breakthrough around this question when I realized that despite my years of writing of the treachery of false dichotomies, I had fallen prey to one myself. Grounded in my understanding of quantum mechanics, I believe that the individual stories and the unified testimonio are not two poles on a testimonial continuum but rather are actually the same phenomenon from different points of view.

To mediate the appearance of a paradox, I suggest that the illusion of separation is a device we each create to make the material world understandable. Physicist David Bohm offers the principle of the implicate order, the underlying unity of all things, as foundational to his construction of the theory of quantum mechanics.

It is meaningless to view the universe as composed of parts...Dividing reality up into parts and then naming those parts is always arbitrary. Despite the apparent separateness of things at the explicate [material] level, everything is a seamless extension of everything else...Bohm cautions that this does not mean the universe is a giant undifferentiated mass. Things can be part of an undivided whole and still possess their own unique qualities.²⁹⁷

With one of the world's greatest physicists at my side, I am prepared to say that the testimonios stand simultaneously as both unique individual stories and a coherent singularity of critical resistance, and it is the act of observation that will differentiate between them. Here, critical resistance manifests both as the theme for the individual stories and the framework for their interconnectedness. I offer the idea that critical consciousness born within the recognition of individual and collective freedom awakens the imagination and creates a vision of a parallel reality where the boundaries drawn by the forces of oppression become at first transversable and then irrelevant. Such is the potential for critical resistance within the Borderlands. As many of

²⁹⁷ Talbot, Michael. *The Holographic Universe*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002, 49.

the stories reveal, such utopian imaginings are difficult to sustain; but without them, resistance is destined to fulfill its dystopian destiny as futile.

The material world, of course, is fraught with challenges and contradictions. I've written about the importance of my immersion into the worlds of those whose stories form the landscape of this inquiry. I learned that to relinquish the constructed position of individual objectivity is extremely liberating. Yet, it is important to state this inquiry has taught me that such liberation must be tempered always by humility. The landscape of public education is too complex to respond to formulaic solutions overlaid on existing structures of oppression. My efforts to construct theoretical incursions into that very landscape must be tempered by the knowledge that the power of such theories will be manifested only to the extent that they are grounded in a pedagogical practice, which at this moment in my life I cannot claim. Humility is a powerful antidote that protects me from being seduced into a judgmental stance, from which I assess the work of educators who survive each day within the contested spaces of public education. Instead, I allow myself to imagine that an emerging or experienced educational practitioner who reads this testimonio may be moved to consider the possibilities of dissent by a particular story where an individual faced with oppressive circumstances responds with acts of resistance that can and do lead to authentic change.

I will end the dissertation with the words of the great and powerful Wizard of Oz, who as the young in heart all know, was neither great, nor powerful, nor a wizard but merely a human being and a rather flawed one at that. In the iconic 1939 film, we learn that despite being something of a humbug, the Wizard wanted to keep his promises to Dorothy and her friends. To do so, he would have to find a brain for the Scarecrow, a heart for the Tin Man, courage for the Lion and a way home for our dear girl from Kansas. Near the end of the film, the Wizard turns to

Scarecrow, who is as close to a hero as we are likely to find in Oz or anywhere else, and imparts a tiny piece of wisdom.

Why, anybody can have a brain. That's a very mediocre commodity. Every pusillanimous creature that crawls on the Earth or slinks through slimy seas has a brain. Back where I come from, we have universities, seats of great learning, where men go to become great thinkers. And when they come out, they think deep thoughts and with no more brains than you have. But they have one thing you haven't got: a diploma.²⁹⁸

I think I'm almost there.

²⁹⁸ Hearn, Michael Patrick. Ed. *The Wizard of Oz: The Screenplay*. New York: Bantham Books, 1989, 218.

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